



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.

Together with the day to day work outlined below, this department leads on the following improvement priority projects:

- Support People's Well-being (Improvement Priority 3)
- Strategy to Keep Families Together (Improvement Priority 6)
- Ensure a specialist appropriate local provision for children with the most complex needs (Improvement Priority 6)
- Ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive (Improvement Priority 6)

It is also noted that the Department is contributing to the improvement priority of Workforce Planning (Corporate Support Department) by responding specifically to the recruitment challenges in the care field and by ensuring that we have enough employees with the necessary skills to cope with the increasing need that is likely to arise in the future.

There are several teams within our service and we work within 3 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.

Promoting well-being and 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 to improve our ability to respond to the needs of Gwynedd residents, in a coordinated, integrated and efficient manner.

Early Intervention

The offer 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.

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 permission. We will help by responding to needs and providing appropriate services.

We have received 309 referrals to the Team Around the Family in 2020-21.

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.

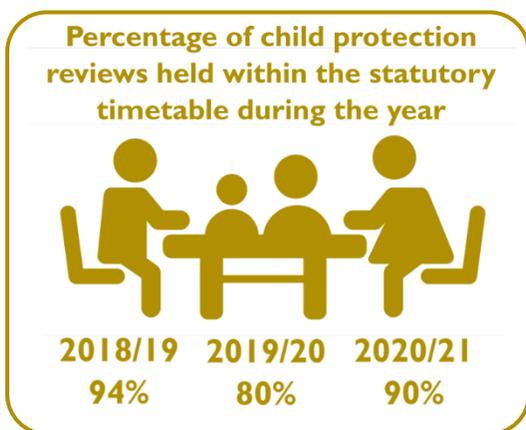
Care and support, safeguarding, and care needs

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, and 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** continue to maintain high standards when responding promptly to referrals that could be safeguarding ones, 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.

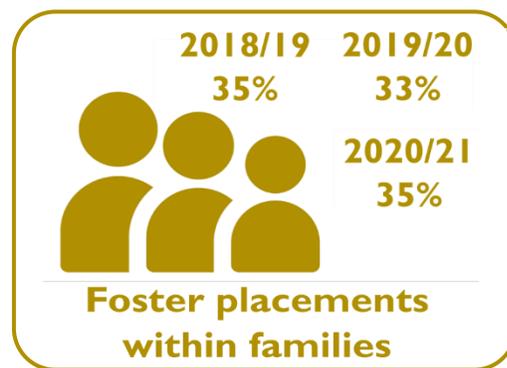
The **Social Work Teams** offer support and intensive intervention for children and their families. Social workers see children and their families regularly and keep in touch with them, remaining alert to issues of risk to children and young people. We ensure that there are resources available to support 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 Trobwynt Team.



We also conduct child protection investigations; and sometimes, some families require highly intensive support and we need to bring children who are at risk 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 sufficient foster parents to satisfy the needs of children who cannot live at home.

The role of the **Fostering Team** is to ensure that we have plenty of foster parents to meet the needs of children who are unable to live at home. We assess and support foster carers so that they can provide children who come into our care with the necessary support, and this 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.

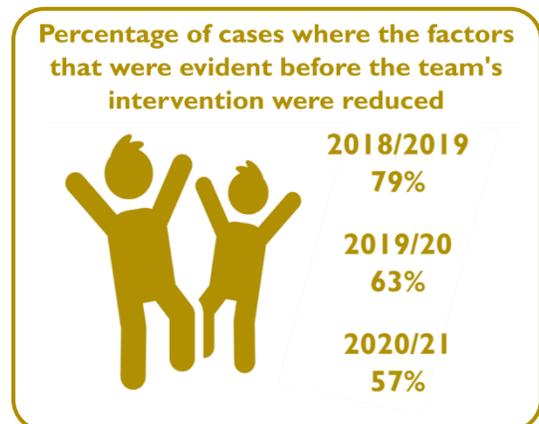
While a child is in the Council's care, it is our responsibility to provide a clear care plan for him/her which is reviewed regularly in order to ensure that the right decisions are made for the benefit of the child and that there are no delays in the plan.



The **Post-16 Team** supports young people that either need protecting or need care and support, including young people who have received care 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' Plan gives young people who are not ready to leave their foster placement on their 18th birthday the choice to stay on until they are ready to do so.

The Specialist Teams

The purpose of **Trobwynt 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.



The needs of families we supported during 2020/21 have been more complex and intensive; especially the number of young people in their teens who received support.

As part of these interventions the **Trobwynt Team** offers intensive support packages aimed at keeping children stable in their homes. The **Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS)** offers specialist intervention for families where there is alcohol and drug misuse from the parents and carers which 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 **Reflection** project offers specialist support to parents who have children in the care system on a permanent basis. In addition, **Trobwynt** offers a specialist service that focuses on abolishing care orders where intensive work has already been completed, and through this offers a way out of care for children and their families.

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 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, 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 do not often 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 they are sufficiently empowered to take action if the plans are not followed.



This Department's work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives
- Live in a natural Welsh society
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.