



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2022/23



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Os ydych chi angen yr adroddiad yma mewn iaith neu fformat arall, ffoniwch ni ar 01766 771000 neu e-bostiwch Cydraddoldeb@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

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إذا أردت هذا التقرير بلغة أو تنسيق (شكل) بديل، فيرجى الاتصال بنا على ٠١٧٦٦ ٧٧١٠٠٠ أو البريد الإلكتروني Equality@gwynedd.gov.wales

*** In order to protect the privacy of individuals, we have changed names in the stories that appear in this report.**

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR ...



DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to publish my first annual report. At the beginning of this fiscal year, Morwena Edwards was the Director for Social Services and we thank her very much for her thorough work before leaving during the summer 2022. Her commitment was an example to us and to the service, and her strong leadership through the pandemic period was unremitting. I joined the Council in October 2022 and I would like to thank Lois Owens for her work in assisting me to draw up this report.

According to the expectations of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Statutory Director of Social Services is required to publish a report on the social services duties within the local authority over the previous year, at the end of every fiscal year. Therefore, this is our opportunity to evaluate our performance and draw attention to lessons to be learnt and the required improvements. The report goes on to provide a summary of what is in progress over the year to come.

The form of the report has followed national guidance over the past years, but you will see that we have attempted to make it more accessible and reader-friendly this year. We appreciate your feedback on this and any ideas

on how we can make it more accessible to all in the future.

The past few years have not been easy for the people of Gwynedd or for the social services workforce. The pandemic was incredibly challenging for our carers, our residential homes, those workers who visit people in their homes, and for all other workers. The impacts of the pandemic continue, of course, and we can see the challenges posed by the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of waiting lists for health treatments in our communities. The impacts of these things are felt by the people of Gwynedd and, consequently, by our workforce, our Councillors and our services.

We cannot thank our workforce enough and we hope that this report shows the results of our hard and tireless work over the past year.



Dylan Owen

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How are people shaping our services?

Engagement and finding out “what matters” to residents are the cornerstones of our way of working. It would not be possible to provide fit-for-purpose social services without placing individuals at the heart of their care, and efforts to include the voice of users when steering our work are continuing.

With the COVID-19 restrictions ending during the year, we have been able to hold more activities and face-to-face contacts - and it is nice to see the vibrancy of meetings at village halls and leisure centres once again. On the other hand, lessons were learnt from the pandemic and many have told us that they feel more comfortable and safe engaging with us virtually, and that it is also more convenient. Services such as **Llwybrau Llesiant**, where individuals with learning disabilities decide on the team’s activities, are now holding online and face-to-face sessions.

Looking ahead, we will continue to review our way of working, and ensure that the voice of the user leads developments. Our intention is to hold forums across our services so that residents have the opportunity to have their say; to be full partners in our strategic development; and lead on new ideas and service planning. It is essential that we are held accountable for our work, but even more importantly, that every part of the work has been co-produced. Going in this direction is no mean feat and we understand that it will take time to establish the forums and change our culture.

812

PEOPLE ARE MEMBERS
OF THE GWYNEDD
CITIZENS' PANEL



113

ATTENDED THE GWYNEDD
OLDER PEOPLE CONFERENCE



130

ATTENDED OLDER
PEOPLE FORUMS IN
DOLGELLAU, PWLLHELI,
PENRHYNDEUDRAETH,
BANGOR AND
CAERNARFON

70

ATTENDED THE DEMENTIA
CONFERENCE



650

HAD THEIR SAY ON THE PUBLIC
SERVICES BOARD'S WELL-BEING
PLAN BY RESPONDING TO THE
SURVEY OR ATTENDING A FORUM

“

Care Inspectorate Wales reported during their review of the safeguarding children service in March 2023 that they had, on the whole, seen

“good practice in terms of evidence that children’s voices and experiences are considered when making safeguarding decisions”

and that they had seen examples of clear communication with parents.

”

In the pipeline for 2023/24 and beyond...

1. Drawing up a communication and engagement plan across the care field to ensure that they include our communities effectively when developing our services
2. Publishing the Gwynedd Adults Needs Assessment and the Public Services Board’s Well-being Plan. Developing and publishing the Gwynedd Children Needs Assessment.
3. Reconvening the Equality Core Group, in order to obtain the views of external organisations which represent people with equality characteristics on matters within the Council.
4. Looking to develop a county youth forum to make sure that we include the voice of young people when making decisions. Develop older people forums and carer forums further.

1

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

“ —

Our family would like to thank the incredible team of carers who cared for Mum. She received exceptional care, kindness and friendship from you as carers, and you went the ‘extra mile’ repeatedly.

Mum always looked forward to seeing you, and you cheered her up and had plenty of fun and laughter.

You did something special and made a real difference to Mum’s life, and you became a part of the family. We will never forget this.

— ”

DOMICILIARY CARE HOURS PER WEEK:



DATA: 31/03/23

PROVIDING:

9,478 HOURS

STILL LOOKING TO PROVIDE:

1,163 HOURS

1,663

PEOPLE RECEIVING A
TELECARE SERVICE

592

NEW TELECARER PACKAGES
SET UP DURING THE YEAR



208

RESIDENTS RECEIVING
DIRECT PAYMENTS
(MARCH 2023)

Director’s Comments

It is essential that individuals manage their care - they are the experts in their own lives. It is not our place to tell “Mrs Jones” what she needs; our job is to help “Mrs Jones” make decisions on how she can do what matters to her.

This year, there were many examples where staff worked diligently with individuals, and their families, over time, in order to provide care and support tailored to their needs. The work they do transforms the lives of individuals who are often in a vulnerable situation.

We have continued to collaborate closely with the Health Board and there are good examples of integrated work in some of our **Community Resources Teams**, the disability equipment team, and the **Derwen Team**, which supports children with disabilities.

I am duty-bound to ensure that we tackle some of the strategic barriers and serious challenges that became apparent over the winter whilst collaborating with partners for the benefit of our residents. With a new Chair leading the Health Board since February 2023, it is a perfect opportunity to revisit matters and ensure that we put appropriate arrangements in place to ensure open communication and collaboration over the next year.

In future, we intend to give residents much more flexibility to choose the care that is suitable for them. We will develop a simpler system for direct payments so that we are confident to offer them in every situation, and we will use innovative telecare technology when supporting individuals and carers.

Elis's Story

Elis, an 87-year-old individual, came to our attention through our regular meetings with the general hospital and then the community hospital.

He had sustained a serious injury following an accident on his farm, and during his time in hospital, tests showed that he was also suffering from a serious illness. At home, in his own house and in the company of his elderly sheepdog is where he wanted to be, and he made it clear that he would not consider living anywhere else.

The social worker and occupational therapist collaborated with the hospital and the palliative care team to obtain equipment to make things easier for him at home. Elis's son lived far away and was unable to offer day-to-day care, but he could help with the administrative side of the direct payments package. The social worker arranged for Elis to receive direct payments and contacted a care company that was willing to provide the care.

Elis went home from hospital according to his wishes, to the company of his dog. The worker continued to visit him to ensure that the care addressed his needs, and Elis was able to spend the last year of his life at home - something that meant so much to him.



What were our intentions according to the last years report, and have we managed to achieve this?

Strengthen the occupational therapy support available to people and re-examine the role that technology and telecare could play in order to facilitate care for residents...

We managed to fill some empty **occupational therapy** posts, including a trainee who will qualify in December 2023. Temporary social work practitioners were appointed to support with less complicated assessments in the interim.

Despite our best efforts, the demand on the service remains high, and some adults are waiting over three months for an assessment as there is a need to prioritise based on risk. We intend to make use of the [AskSARA](#) website, which offers an online self-assessment and suggests the tools that could help to make everyday life easier.

A project manager has been appointed to lead on transforming the telecare service and to facilitate the transfer of analog equipment to digital by 2025. The hope is that the new equipment will be trialled during 2023/24.

Establish the new Domiciliary Care model in the county...

The process of transferring to the [new Domiciliary Care model](#) continued, nevertheless, recruitment difficulties hindered the efforts in some areas such as Llanberis and Ardudwy.

Half of the complaints (11) received about the Adults Department in 2022/23 related to the lack of hours available to commence new domiciliary care packages or to increase care package hours. There was a reduction during the final quarter of the year (1 complaint). We will monitor this over the next 12 months.

The service has experienced great benefit from working within communities and strengthening contact with community groups and the third sector locally is a priority for the future.

Collaborating with the Welcome Centre for refugees fleeing from Ukraine to Gwynedd...

Officers worked with residents and charities to offer accommodation to almost **300** Ukrainian refugees across the county.

Every individual received a welfare visit, contact from support workers and they were offered trauma support, resettlement and mental health support in order to respond to their personal needs. In more complex and difficult cases, the support worker can draw on further support as needed, for example, from an occupational therapist or a community nurse.

In the pipeline for 2023/24 and beyond...

1. Supporting our residents through the process of digital transformation by 2025 and ensure that telecare and technology is used to its full potential.
2. Developing an electronic opinion poll for children that receive a service from Derwen.
3. Revisiting the way we support the care provision process through direct payments e.g. by considering methods such as Virtual Wallets.
4. Embedding the new domiciliary care model and ensuring that internal and external providers collaborate effectively with the communities more broadly.
5. Continuing to empower the integrated teams (teams which include care staff and health staff), by looking at appropriate training and removing any technological barriers.



2

Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

201
CARERS' ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED



CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY FOOD SCHEMES FUND:

£104k



150

STAFF MEMBERS HAVE ATTENDED THE AUTISM AWARENESS TRAINING

121

YOUNG CARERS HAVE RECEIVED SUPPORT



THE SUM OF FUEL VOUCHERS FOR HOMES :

£76k



“

I'm so glad that I came here today. I didn't know what to expect but I feel much more content as I left and having gotten everything off my chest. Thanks for understanding and making the situation so easy for me.

- “Help with the Cost-of-living” event attendee

”

Director's Comments

Unpaid care is hard and praiseworthy work, although these people are not given the acknowledgement that they deserve. Caring for a loved one 24/7 is difficult and accessing emotional and practical support is essential. Forums such as the Gwynedd Carers Network, Dementia Actif Carers Group and the Young Carers Group offer a sounding board and an opportunity to chat to other unpaid carers.

I am glad that the **Learning Disabilities Service** is making good use of our respite and short break provisions, and thus managing to offer periods of respite to carers and offer valuable experiences for individuals to socialise and develop skills at the same time. Some transitional age individuals (18 years old) also use respite periods to prepare for successful independent living.

Unfortunately, however, some support services face capacity challenges because they are experiencing recruitment difficulties, for example, the **Derwen Team**, which offers support and short breaks for the families of disabled children. The team has had to advertise four times for a Social Worker post. Similar challenges are seen in the domiciliary care field, where Gwynedd's demography is showing an increase in demand as the population is ageing and there are fewer people of working age to provide the care.

The results of the 2021 Census show that there are almost 10,000 unpaid carers in Gwynedd, but we know that we are not reaching the vast majority of these individuals. The sad thing is that some carers experience stress and a deterioration in their own health, and therefore, it is essential that we have the services to support them in place. It is crucial that we increase our support to unpaid carers.

Cai's Story

Cai is 13 years old and helps to care for his disabled brother and sister. Cai attends Young Carer sessions held by **Action for Children**, and he has appreciated the opportunity to meet other young carers. Here, Cai explains the benefit he has experienced since he started using the AiDi App and young carer ID card:

"(Young Carers have) given me support to help me with all my young caring duties and certain aspects of being a young carer. Before it just seemed like I was a bit like an endless babysitter but now it's definitely given me more of an explanation of why I'm doing it.

(The ID card) means when I'm late to school due to young caring duties then instead of having a whole major thing like before when I had to tell teachers or wait after lessons to explain to them ... all I have to do in the mornings is quickly pull out the card, twist it to blue and put it back in and he'll understand. He won't say anything like "why are you late?"

It can be quite embarrassing sometimes explaining even to a teacher that knows about why you're late. It puts loads of weight off your shoulders once you know it will be hard but there's going to become a time when the people around you and the people you need the most will be there for you."



What were our intentions according to the last years report, and have we managed to achieve this?

Provide a programme of support so that residents can cope with the cost-of-living crisis..

A tackling poverty coordinator and officer was appointed during summer 2022, along with two Tackling Fuel Poverty Officers for the Housing and Property Department.

They focused on supporting residents by providing financial advice, raising awareness of various benefits and discounts, and provided access to emergency food provision. A [Cost-of-Living Support page](#) was created on the Council's website, highlighting the help available and where to obtain specialist information.

With Citizens' Advice Bureau, Nyth and housing agencies, "Help with the cost-of-living" roadshows were arranged in various locations, including leisure centres, hospital receptions, housing estates, village halls and libraries. The positive feedback received from the attendees proved how valuable the sessions were.

Review the way we provide a Mental Health Service for the residents of Gwynedd...

This year, we received over **5,000** referrals to the **Mental Health Service**, which is around **2,000** more referrals than the normal pre-COVID-19 period. Although it is an integrated service with the Health Board, substantial obstructions hindered the efforts made to collaborate, causing risks to individuals' lives.

The possible options of re-designing the way that the Council offers mental health support are being considered, and a report will be submitted to the Cabinet in 2023/24 in order to make a decision on the best way forward.

Looking on the way we implement our Autism Plan and raise awareness amongst our workforce and beyond...

Autism awareness training was presented to the staff of the **Children's and Adults Departments**. Interactive sessions were held on the Autism Bus, giving people an opportunity to experience some of the sensory processing difficulties faced by individuals on the spectrum.

There were recruitment challenges, but an Autism Practice Lead has been appointed and they will start in May.

Meanwhile, the Council's website has been updated to include [information about autism](#) in order to highlight the local support available for individuals and families.

In the pipeline for 2023/24 and beyond...

1. Adoption Poverty Mitigation and Prevention Plan (establish the Gwynedd Poverty Group, Food Network and Food Charter) and evaluate the current network of Helping People Hubs and expand to further areas.
2. Make full use of our day care and respite services, and look at possible options to remodel the provision in the Ffestiniog and Eifionydd areas.
3. Lead on a Carers Plan (Adults and Children) to ensure that we know, acknowledge and support the priceless work that unpaid carers across Gwynedd do.
4. Implement the Autism Plan in order to make it easier for autism individuals and their families to transfer between different services.
5. Conduct a review of our mental health services provision model to ensure that we meet our responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being Act



3

Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

Director's Comments

The most important priority for Cyngor Gwynedd is to ensure people's safety. We know that some face a higher risk of harm, neglect or abuse, and there is a robust system in place in order to identify the risk, and act to protect people.

Following the COVID-19 period, we returned to hold face-to-face Child Protection Conferences, to ensure that appropriate safeguarding decisions are made and to give the best possible experience to children and parents.

We take pride in the work of the **Youth Justice Service** which works intensively with children and young people who have offended to prevent them from re-offending, as no young person from Gwynedd has been in prison or remanded since 2020.

The **Children's Referrals Team** received **over 7,000** referrals this year - an increase of around **2,500** since the pre-COVID-19 period. The **Mental Health Service** saw a similar increase and I know that due to the excellent work of our teams the risks was managed in the vast majority of cases.

We take pride in this work, whilst also knowing that dealing with the increase in referrals is not sustainable, and I am concerned about the pressures placed on our workforce.

Work was done to clear the backlog of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessments whilst the Government looked at modifying the current arrangements. However, we now know that the change will not be introduced, and we will need to consider the challenge of managing DoLS applications. DoLS is a statutory procedure which protects individuals who are unable to make decisions on their care and freedom (for example, individuals with dementia), in a residential home or hospital. Without an assessment, there is a risk that individuals are held captive against their will.



91%

OF ADULT SAFEGUARDING REFERRALS WERE RESPONDED TO WITHIN THE STATUTORY SEVEN DAYS

97%

OF ADULT SAFEGUARDING REFERRALS COMPLETED DURING THE YEAR, WHERE THE RISK HAS BEEN CONTROLLED



84%

OF CHILD PROTECTION REVIEWS HELD WITHIN THE STATUTORY TIMETABLE DURING THE YEAR

98%

OF RISK ASSESSMENTS SUBMITTED TO A CASE CONFERENCE WHICH WERE CONSIDERED AS EXHIBITING QUALITY IN DECISION MAKING



95%

OF CASE CONFERENCE WHERE THE VOICE OF THE CHILD WAS HEARD (EXCLUDING CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD)

“

The local authority responds well to safeguarding concerns. We saw evidence of professionals in the safeguarding team working effectively with partners from the local health board and the police, as well as wider local authority teams, to protect adults at risk. There are also wider forums for considerations of risk where the threshold for safeguarding has not been reached.

- **Care Inspectorate Wales Report**
September 2022

”

Lowri's Story

Lowri came to the attention of the Child Safeguarding Service when she was in hospital about to give birth. Lowri had not followed the usual pre-natal pathways and had not presented herself to Maternity Services until very late, and safeguarding concerns were highlighted whilst she was on the maternity ward.

The biggest concern related to her behaviour, and Lowri's tendency to lie and make a series of statements that were proven to be unfounded. She alleged that her former partner was stalking her; she lied to the domestic abuse services whilst she was living in a secure location; and in terms of her new baby, she named many different fathers. It also emerged that she had two older children who were now living with other members of the family.

Lowri had many strengths. There was no general concern about her ability to provide day-to-day basic care, she showed good emotional care towards her child and her new partner was also a positive influence.

Through the innovative "**Effective child protection**" framework (developed by Cyngor Gwynedd's experienced child protection practitioners), her strengths were focused on and definitive '*steps towards change*' were set so that Lowri and everyone associated with the case knew what matters needed to be addressed. Officers were able to provide suitable support to the family in order to move them from a '*not good enough*' category of care to a '*good enough*' category of care.

The situation will continue to be monitored through regular Case Conferences, and Lowri and the child's biological father are collaborating well with the assessment processes and showing perseverance to stay on the right track.



What were our intentions according to the last years report, and have we managed to achieve this?

Put the Emrallt Team training programme into practice in order to identify and respond early to children and young people who are displaying harmful and problematic sexual behaviour...

A total of **993** officers from across the health, education and social care sector attended training facilitated by the **Emrallt Team**, which has exceeded expectations. The training programme includes many tiers, from defining and identifying harmful sexual behaviour, to addressing harmful sexual behaviour in primary and secondary schools. The team also offers bespoke packages in order to upskill employees in specific fields.

With growth in the use of technology, an increase was seen in enquiries relating to behaviours such as *sexting* and online sexual abuse. Therefore, the team will focus on building harmful sexual behaviour intervention resources for parents and carers.

Implementing the 2022/23 Youth Justice Plan...

The rates of new offenders and reoffending rates are lower than regional and national comparisons and no young person from Gwynedd has been remanded since 2020.

Following the COVID-19 period, the **Youth Justice Service** has found it difficult to ensure that the

young people who are supported attend training, education or employment opportunities. On the other hand, the individuals benefit greatly from the close relationship with the **Housing and Property Department** and are receiving suitable and timely accommodation support. The substance misuse intervention and treatment is also working well.

Encourage more staff to complete training in the domestic abuse field...

By now, completing the "Domestic Abuse" e-module is mandatory and work is progressing to include this as a part of the induction of new staff. The 'Ask and Act' training is also promoted in order to give staff confidence to help individuals who experience abuse, domestic abuse or sexual abuse.

In May 2022, the Council received the 'White Ribbon' accreditation which acknowledged the effort of engaging with men and boys, changing culture and raising awareness on violence against women. There is a need to continue to spread the word that enough is enough, and officers are working on the White Ribbon organisation's three-year action plan.

In the pipeline for 2023/24 and beyond...

1. Strengthening our quality assurance services to ensure sufficient support to care providers to help them maintain a quality service for the residents of Gwynedd.
2. Reviewing our Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) arrangements.



4

Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

440

VISITS PER MONTH TO FACE-TO-FACE DEMENTIA ACTIVE SESSIONS ACROSS THE COUNTY (AVERAGE)



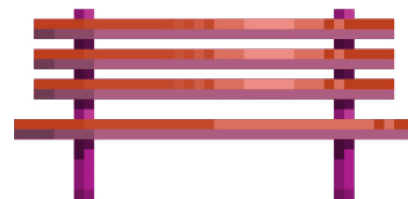
98

YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET) HAVE RECEIVED ACCREDITATIONS THROUGH THE SERVICE



20

"FRIENDSHIP BENCHES" TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO CHAT AND CHALLENGE LONELINESS



135

YOUNG PEOPLE

404

OLDER PEOPLE HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECT



“

You have been really good at supporting me and the advice I got was excellent and you were also excellent in helping me to open a bank account. Thanks also to the company.

- a young person who is receiving support from the Youth Service

”

Director's Comments

Contact with family and friends and the ability to play a role in society are key to the well-being of individuals. Lack of relationships can lead to feelings of loneliness, and it is reported that the impact of social isolation can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day!

In Gwynedd, there are teams that work hard to enable individuals to socialise and contribute within their communities. During the year, most of our activities returned to being face-to-face, with some virtual provision, and our Community Connectors have supported and held the hands of the individuals who were slightly nervous about re-joining society following the pandemic.

We are going to work with communities in order to make sure that they are accessible so that everyone can participate fully. I refer to the wish of the Older People Commissioner for Wales and the Welsh Government for every local authority in Wales to receive an accreditation as an [age-friendly community](#) by 2025. A Gwynedd Age Friendly plan has been developed and it will be an important part of our work in the future.

We know that the answers to the challenges faced by older people are broader than the influence of social services only. Therefore, we need to work across departments, facilitating matters such as accessible pavements, public toilet availability and benches or places to rest in towns and villages. These types of changes would not only benefit the older generation, but the whole society - whether children, families, disabled individuals or those living with a health condition.

Carol and Sera's Story

Carol is 92 years old and has been living with mixed Dementia (vascular and Alzheimer's) for seven years. She was a nurse at a hospital and then at a nursing home until she retired, and since then she was a keen member of the Women's Institute and she enjoyed knitting and sewing.

Following the death of her husband before the pandemic, Carol moved to live with her daughter, Sera. Carol felt isolated and missed the company and being involved with the local community and Sera also felt that she needed support in her role as an unpaid carer. After seeing a Dementia Actif advertisement at the Leisure Centre, Sera contacted the team.

The Dementia Actif sessions have given them both an opportunity to network and socialise with other people. They have enjoyed taking part in different activities including a trip on the train and visiting the cinema, a garden party, afternoon tea (with a carers group), boccia league and a local conference at Plas Tan y Bwlch.

The importance of the activities for Carol and Sera is that they help give a structure to their week, and ensure that they have the opportunity to leave the house and meet new people, which ensures that they have fresh experiences to talk about. Since she started attending the sessions, Sera has noticed that her mother is in better spirits and that she is sleeping much better.

"Our involvement with Dementia Actif has benefited us both. My mother has benefited physically by participating in the strength and balance exercises and mentally through the social aspect of the sessions. I have benefited from the support network offered and I have made new friends."



What were our intentions according to the last years report, and have we managed to achieve this?

Supporting young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)...

Specific 1:1 support was provided for some young people between 16-25 years old through the **Youth Service**. Lead Support Workers assisted individuals to identify their strengths and the barriers that prevent them from proceeding on their path to employment.

The young people were put in contact with part or full-time education, or on to the Gwaith Gwynedd employment programme. In addition, group work was carried out as a way of developing the personal, social and emotional skills that are essential to training or work.

Continuing to implement the Intergenerational Project programme...

The Intergenerational programme (Pontio'r Cenedlaethau) went from strength to strength during the year, with more projects put into practice in order to create and nurture new links between children and people of all ages.

During the year a number of activities were held, which included **Caffi Creu** where young people aged between 16 and 25 years from GISDA came together with older people from the Caernarfon area to share sewing and gardening skills; a cuppa and chat session on **Bala 'Past and Present'** with the artist Mari Gwent for Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn pupils and Canolfan Henblas, and a joint [environmental day with Adra in Maesgeirchen, Bangor](#).

The number of friendship benches across Gwynedd continued to increase, and it is nice to see the excellent collaboration that is happening, e.g. in [Plas Ogwen](#). The intergenerational project

is beneficial to all participants and it's great to see the relationships blossom during the projects.

Providing support so that care home residents gain online skills...

During 2022/23, we managed to visit every council care home (apart from one who dealt with cases of COVID-19), in order to provide more devices such as "Alexa" and offer training to residents on how to use these devices.

The COVID-19 period has shown the importance of technology as a means for the most vulnerable people of the county to keep in contact with their families, and work has commenced on upgrading the broadband provision at the care homes. The work to extend technology in the homes will be an ongoing programme.

Of course, technology is also important for staff and after carrying out an assessment with the home's managers, the work of allocating laptops so that they can access online training through Teams or Zoom and receive payslips online will commence early in 2023/24.

In the pipeline for 2023/24 and beyond...

1. Aim to gain an 'age-friendly community' accreditation from the World Health Organisation in order to ensure that residents of all ages can have a good life in their local community.
2. Publishing a programme of social activities and opportunities for a broad range of individuals and carers across our care services.
3. Commencing the construction work to adapt Canolfan Dolfeurig in Dolgellau in order to add to the network of community hubs to support individuals with learning disabilities.



5

Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

“

I wanted to send you and the Drws y Nant Team a message, if you see them please give them a huge thanks for the past two years and I want to say sorry to everyone for how I was before but I have changed and I'm so proud that I have and that is through everyone's help with therapy and giving me the chance to change so I want to thank you for everything...you've been fair with me through it and I mean this in the nicest possible way but I hope that I will never see social ever again but thank you so much x"

- **Trobwynt Team, Arfon Children's Team, Support Service and Review's Team user**

”

Director's Comments

The Care Inspectorate Wales review confirmed that no children go into care unnecessarily in Gwynedd and when families face challenging periods, we have services that offer timely and appropriate support so that those children can stay with their parents, and thrive healthily and safely.

The Council offers different tiers of support to families - varying from the **Team Around the Family**, which collaborates with families to intervene early when problems emerge (which happens on a voluntarily basis) to more intense support from the **Trobwynt Services** which offer a range of interventions for children who are about to come into care.

We do our best to support parents in tough times and we receive regular feedback which states that. There are some cases where we can do more to explain our work to families. The main cause of complaints directed to the Children's Department was a lack of clear communication. We intend to improve this.

Sometimes, it is inevitable that a child is brought to our care as it is dangerous for them to remain at home. When this happens, our responsibilities as corporate parents are to ensure the best opportunities for them in life - exactly as we would do with our own children.

We work hard to ensure suitable and happy homes for every child in our care. During 2023/24, we will develop a residential provision for looked after children in small group homes within the county, so that we can support children with intense needs in our communities.



281

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (31.03.23)

5%

OF LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN ON 31.03.23 WHO HAVE HAD THREE OR MORE PLACEMENTS DURING THE YEAR



8%

OF CHILDREN WHO RETURNED HOME FROM CARE DURING THE YEAR



106

FAMILIES RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM A TEAM AROUND THE FAMILY COORDINATOR

90%

OF REVIEWS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN HELD WITHIN THE STATUTORY TIMETABLE

100%

OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN WHO HAVE HAD A PERSONAL ADVISOR DELEGATED TO THEM



Joe's Story

Joe, 15 years of age, was referred to the **Rehousing and Prevention (RAP) Service** after his foster placement broke down as he had tried to force his brother's girlfriend to commit suicide and had used an online platform to encourage others to cause themselves harm.

Joe's Social Worker was eager for him to receive 1:1 therapeutic support as she was concerned that without support, he could continue to experience further failures in placements due to a lack of understanding about his inappropriate behaviour towards his peers.

A number of preliminary sessions were arranged where Joe was introduced to a therapist, and with time, he became comfortable to talk about events that were difficult for him to recall. Specialist techniques were used for children with symptoms of complex trauma and Joe managed to address his feelings and emotions. Weekly catch-up sessions were arranged with the Social Worker, and Joe's new foster parents benefited from knowing that support was *'only a phone call away'*.

After a period in foster care, Joe was able to return home to live with his birth mother, who has also received emotional and practical support from the Children's Services. He obtained a part-time job, and says that this is something that he would not have *'been able to achieve if he had not been able to access welfare support'*. He has also made new friends, which, he says, has helped him feel that he is *'accepted'*. Joe now intends to complete a college course, and he says that he's feeling *'much happier'*.

The **Rehousing and Prevention (RAP) Service provides direct therapeutic support to Foster Carers and Adopters who manage very complex behaviours and families that are at breaking point due to conflict. The objective is to reduce the number of looked-after children, reduce the need to place children out-of-county, and to support the development of a high-quality local care provision for the children of Gwynedd.*



What were our intentions according to the last years report, and have we managed to achieve this?

Implementing changes as a result of the “Ffordd Gwynedd” review in the Children’s Department and Education Department...

Considerable work was done on the collaboration between departments at the beginning of the year and a joint understanding was developed in many fields. There was some delay in the review as a result of the departure of the former director, and we intend to recommence the work during the coming year.

Extending the Flying Start (Dechrau’n Deg) provision...

[Flying Start](#) is a programme funded by Welsh Government to support families in some deprived areas with raising children and parenting, children’s language and speech development and health and care support.

The process of expanding **Flying Start** is happening gradually. The **Early Years’ Service** has put Phase 1 into action since September 2022 in parts of Tregarth, Bethesda and Blaenau Ffestiniog, which will benefit an additional 73 children.

Phase 2 of the expansion will commence in April and will include extending the childcare offer to more areas in Caernarfon, Dyffryn Nantlle, Pwllheli, Porthmadog, Barmouth, Bala and Bro Ffestiniog.

The programme has highlighted the need to look at the sustainability of the childcare sector and work to review the provision across the county will proceed over the next period.

Implementing the “No Wrong Door” Strategy...

In the spring 2022, the Cabinet accepted the ‘No Wrong Door’ regional strategy. This strategy responded to the Children’s Commissioner for Wales report which called for transforming the way that services work together to support children and young people so that they do not fall between two stools, or are placed on waiting lists for lengthy periods and then being told that they are on the wrong list.

The Strategy corresponds to the **Children’s Department** principles and is a part of our arrangements to develop and strengthen its front door arrangements, access to services, and the offering of early intervention and support to prevent problems from worsening. The ‘**Gwynedd Family Hub**’ and the ‘**Team Around the Family**’ that was established a few years ago are good examples of this.

Over the next five years, we will work within the Strategy to strengthen our ability to extend our services to be more integrated with our partners.

In the pipeline for 2023/24 and beyond...

1. Developing a residential provision for looked-after children in small group homes.





Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

168



HOUSES WERE ADAPTED FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES



843

MINOR ALTERATIONS, SUCH AS INSTALLATION OF HANDRAILS, MOBILE RAMPS



£1.3M

INVESTED ON SCHEMES SUCH AS CREATING ACCESSIBLE BATHROOMS, INSTALLING RAMPS OUTSIDE THE HOUSE, BUILDING EXTENSIONS

28

ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYED WORK



12

INDIVIDUALS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY HAVE HAD THEIR ACCOMMODATION NEEDS MET

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION WAS PROVIDED FOR

542

HOMELESS FAMILIES / INDIVIDUALS

“

I asked an occupational therapist to come and assess my husband who is elderly and has suffered a stroke. Within a few weeks, he'd had a visit and a request had been made to raise the level of the front door step and install new handrails to enable my husband to feel safer when moving around and for him to have some of his independence back. Again, within a month the work had been done. Very courteous young men who discussed every step of the work with us. Thank you, this is really appreciated during these tough times.

”

Director's Comments

Dignity is gained through work. The **Learning Disabilities Service's** access to work programme allows individuals to receive training and support to find suitable employment within our communities. Locations such as Cegin Arfon and Galwch Acw are used to encourage individuals, and help them gain confidence to participate in society.

To promote and enable independent living, suitable accommodation is essential. We noted our intention to develop small care homes for children in the *Quality Standard 5* chapter, and we know that accommodation needs change as individuals raise families, get older or experience a deterioration in their health. People should not have to move just because they are ageing, and everyone should have the choice to stay in their own home where possible. Our **Housing Adaptations Unit** provides prompt adaptations to promote this.

It is inevitable that some will need more intensive accommodation support. This year, it's disappointing to report that there has been delay in our plans to expand the Extra Care Housing provision and this has led to additional challenges for some vulnerable individuals. My intention is to urgently highlight our barriers with the developers.

It is also important to extend our supported housing provision for individuals with learning disabilities. The **Learning Disabilities Service** plans in the long-term to identify the accommodation needs of the individuals they support, and projects to renew houses and build from scratch are in progress to provide suitable accommodation to help individuals to live more independently.

Gwenno's Story

*Gwenno has received support from the **Learning Disabilities Service**, and is now in a safe home and is employed...*

Gwenno moved to a supported housing provision around 10 months ago. As a part of her pathway to living more independently, Gwenno has managed to obtain work in a busy laundry and is working six hours over three days, with staff from the house supporting her there.

Gwenno receives £11.00 per hour for working in the laundry and the employer allows her to work during quiet periods so that there is no pressure on her to meet targets in the same way as workers during busy periods. At the beginning of the period, staff were helping her in the work room but, as her confidence has increased, they have left the room for brief periods. Hopefully, Gwenno will feel happy and comfortable to be left there on her own in the future.

The change in Gwenno is obvious; she has a sense of identity, she feels a part of something, and her self-esteem and self-confidence have increased. The employer themselves feel that they have had a positive experience of employing an individual with a learning disability and her work is as important as the work of any other employee.



What were our intentions according to the last years report, and have we managed to achieve this?

Develop extra units in order to address homelessness in Gwynedd...

Homelessness cases in Gwynedd have been increasing over the past years, which means that the Council's use of temporary accommodation has also increased. Alongside this, the lack of general housing stock in the county is preventing homeless individuals from finding a permanent home.

To date, work has been completed on Tŷ Adferiad, which is accommodation with specialist support for women in Porthmadog, and upgrading Noddfa Hostel in Deiniolen in order to make the accommodation more suitable for homeless individuals and families.

Work is in the pipeline on further sites, including Glan Wnion, Dolgellau (5 units), College Road, Bangor (3 units), Ala Road, Pwllheli (2 units) and High Street, Bangor (12 units).

Nursing Home Provision at Penyberth...

Since the former Penrhos Nursing Home closed at the end of 2020, there has been no provision of nursing beds in the Llŷn area. As a result, some residents are placed far away from their family and home. Recently, it became legally possible for county councils to provide nursing care themselves.

In March 2023, the Cabinet approved a strategic

business case to develop Penyberth, Penrhos as a site to provide nursing care. This is a scheme that is breaking new ground and is a step towards realising the ambition of providing high-quality care and support in the right place at the right time.

The **Adults Department** (in partnership with the Health Board) will proceed to apply for funding from Welsh Government to develop the site.

In the pipeline for 2023/24 and beyond...

1. Opening the Extra Care Housing provision in Pwllheli, and continuing with the work of identifying opportunities for similar developments in other parts of the county, with priority given to the Dolgellau and Caernarfon areas.
2. Adding to the options of suitable accommodation for individuals with Learning Disabilities to encourage independent living instead of funding out-of-county placements, looking specifically at developing the Frondeg, Caernarfon site.
3. Continuing to look for options to extend the dementia provision in our homes.
4. Developing and acting on the Penyberth site business case in order to develop nursing beds jointly with the Health Board, as well as a broad range of accommodation provision with care.
5. Piloting a new scheme entitled 'Home Share' deriving from the national 'Homeshare UK' scheme.



How we do our work?

Our workforce

Providing care, social work, occupational therapy and organising social services can be challenging and difficult for our workforce. Nevertheless, considerable satisfaction can be gained from such work and from knowing that it is possible to enable people to improve their situation. Gwynedd is extremely fortunate to have an excellent, committed and caring workforce and we are incredibly grateful to them.

The number of vacant posts in the **Adults Department** reduced from September 2022 (12% = 113 jobs) to **91** vacant posts at the end of January 2023, **65** of which are care or support work jobs. Despite the improvement, substantial challenges remain regarding workforce recruitment and retention.

At the end of January 2023, there were **16** vacant posts in the **Children's Department**. Between both departments, nine social worker posts were vacant. As a result, many challenges and risks arose, placing additional pressure by forcing day-to-day work to be prioritised, without giving enough time to innovation and development.



VACANT JOB POSTS
(JANUARY 2023):

91 IN THE ADULTS
DEPARTMENT

16 IN THE CHILDRENS
DEPARTMENT

We know that the challenges will increase as the demographic projections suggest that there will be fewer working age people in Gwynedd, and more older people with care needs.

In order to improve the situation, regular recruitment campaigns were held across the county. The results vary. The Council also supports social work and occupational therapy trainees in partnership with Bangor University, the Open University and Prifysgol Glyndŵr, Wrexham.

A [special and powerful video](#) was launched to promote care work in Gwynedd and help the recruitment efforts. At the same time, work was done to review the job descriptions and salaries of care workers employed by the Council, with the intention of putting these into practice in 2023/24. Similarly, a task and finish group was commenced to consider the salary levels of social workers and occupational therapists. This group will present its recommendations in 2023/24.



The Welsh language

Receiving a service in your first language is a need, and not a choice. It is crucial that we ensure a bilingual provision for our residents.

It is not easy to ensure that our workforce is bilingual when it is difficult to recruit workers in general. Therefore, it is important that we establish appropriate procedures to facilitate the Active Offer. We expect our services to provide the Active Offer, which means providing a service in Welsh without anyone having to ask for it, on every occasion. In Gwynedd, our in-house **More Than Just Words** ('Mwy na Geiriau') group meets every month to work towards achieving this goal. We are preparing performance measures on the Active Offer and we hope to be able to report on them next year.

Using our influence is important. The former director was the national and regional lead on **More Than Just Words**, which enabled substantial progress in the provision nation-wide. Another example is that we refused to welcome Youth Justice inspectors as they were unable to guarantee bilingual inspectors, and they agreed to delay their inspection until this was possible.

Ongoing support is available for staff members to learn Welsh through various means and courses are aimed towards all levels of ability and proficiency. **24** members of staff from the **Adults and Children's Departments** have benefited from the Welsh learning resource during the year.

“

I started working for Cyngor Gwynedd in 2020 at the start of the pandemic. I moved to the area recently and I was an occupational therapist, loved it, and had over 30 years experience in social care...(the) Council paid me to attend the Welsh for beginners course face-to-face once a week. The support is also excellent with a weekly chat and informal sessions with a tutor and other learners. I have been lucky enough to go to Nant Gwrtheyrn for a week of intensive Welsh and I intend to have another week there on intermediate level. I am looking forward to attending the Summer School in Bala next month and gaining more opportunities and confidence to speak Welsh.

- Rachel Richardson-Wright, occupational therapist

”

Finance

It has not been an easy year financially for social services and as expected the cost-of-living crisis and inflation placed substantial pressure on our care providers and service costs.

In the 2022/23 year, the net budget of the **Children's Department** was **£21 million** and there was a



£76,000 overspend. This is a healthier financial situation for the department than has been seen for many years, and the main reason for the overspend was new and intensive care packages.

The net budget of the **Adults Department** for the year was **£66 million**, but the added pressure on the service equated to **£3.9 million**. The main financial pressure was the additional costs of external nursing homes, the costs of the learning disability service and the costs of providing care in the community and in residential homes. Another part of the overspending was that departmental savings to the value of **£921,000** were not realised and that the department also used the funds that had not been committed, equivalent to **£1 million**.

2022/23 BUDGET:

CHILDREN'S
DEPARTMENT:

£21M

ADULTS
DEPARTMENT:

£66M



Both departments made extensive use of national grants, particularly the **Social Care Workforce Grant** from Welsh Government and the **Regional Integration Fund**, in order to develop our services in an innovative way and in partnerships. Capital funding was also received from this fund in order to adapt the offices of the integrated teams. Welsh Government also provided capital funding to the value of an additional **£177,000** for the **Flying Start** and **Childcare scheme**.

Due to the financial position of public services, we anticipate substantial pressures again for 2023/24 and a reduction has also been agreed upon in a large number of budgets across both departments. That brings its own challenges, and we intend to review the financial situation of the **Adults Department** as a whole during the coming year.

Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability

There are 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 hold departmental performance challenge meetings every other month.

Regular 1:1 conversations are held between myself and the Heads of the Children's and Adults Departments, as well as the 'Care Lead Team' meeting every two months to discuss any national policy matters, barriers, risks and to celebrate successes.

Following the elections in May 2022, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan was appointed as Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, and Councillor Elin Walker Jones as Cabinet Member for Children



and Supporting Families. The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Nia Jeffreys, is leading on the Supporting People project, which ensures that the programme continues to be a high priority across all Council departments.

In September 2022, Care Inspectorate Wales carried out a [Performance Evaluation Review](#) on our adults services, and it came as no surprise that staffing challenges, higher demand and mental health and neuro-development waiting lists were noted as some of the main risks. The feedback and recommendations received were used to develop our work programme. During March 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales also held a Child Protection Swift Review. Feedback was very positive and showed the quality of our work.

Unfortunately, cases have arisen where things go wrong and where we have not provided a service of the expected high standard. There is a statutory complaints procedure in place to ensure that we receive feedback, and respond to any concerns so that we do not repeat mistakes. Reference has already been made to the main trends of the complaints for this year, and an official summary will appear before the Care Scrutiny Committee in September 2023. We intend to place our complaints report and comments on the Council's website in the future so that they are available to the public.

Partnerships

Social services cannot be effective without working closely with partners in the public services, third sector, community groups, businesses and care providers.

Our in-house collaboration with the **Education Department** strengthened during the period and it Care Inspectorate Wales noted that good work was being done jointly with **North Wales Police**. Whilst challenges do crop up from time to time, on the whole, we have a healthy and strong relationship with our local partners.

Within the Council, the collaboration between social services and the **Housing and Properties Department** also developed and we intended to strengthen this further over the coming year by working on specific projects and undertaking an assessment of care housing needs for the next 20 years.

One positive development during the year is the **Supporting People Hubs** established in many areas. This is an effort to support community groups to ensure that support is available to people locally in a coordinated way. Maintaining preventative and community services like these is essential to safeguard the health and well-being of our residents and reduce the demand on our statutory services.

Our work is given an extra boost through collaborating with **Mantell Gwynedd** and the third sector. The **Third Sector Liaison Group** contributes to effective collaboration, and regular meetings are held to share good practices and to look at ways of pooling resources. As a new director, my intention during 2023/24 is to visit some third sector organisations to obtain a better sense of the work going on from day-to-day and some of the challenges they face.

On a strategic level, we are an operational member on many regional forums. Our Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan, is the chair of the **North Wales Regional Partnership Board**, which brings health boards, local authorities and the third sector together to plan strategically the care and support for people in the area. In March 2023, the [North Wales Regional Plan 2023-28](#) was published, which will steer the work of the Partnership over the coming years.

In order to ensure positive outcomes for the people of Gwynedd, a close partnership with **Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board** is also crucial. We intend to reignite the collaboration within the integrated Community Resources Teams and primary care clusters during the year.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This last section lists the links to further information about some of the things mentioned in this report.

- [Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28](#)
- [Cyngor Gwynedd Performance Report](#) (2022/23 will be available in the autumn)
- [Compliments and Complaints procedure](#)
- [Language Policy](#)
- [Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership](#)
- [Care Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [North Wales Regional Partnership Board](#)
- [North Wales Population Needs Assessment](#)
- [Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Service Board Well-being Plan](#)
- [Care Inspectorate Wales](#)
- [Dewis Cymru](#)