



SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



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

FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR

This year has been one of the toughest that Cyngor Gwynedd has faced in its 30-year history. Social services, and in particular the Children's Services, have been through a period of significant challenge and change, following serious failures in the service and the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* Child Practice Review, which highlighted weaknesses in safeguarding.

There has been a major change in leadership across adult and children's services. It is important to recognise that people have suffered and have been seriously hurt, and on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd, I apologise.

At the same time, I want to recognise the strength, dedication, and resilience of the workforce. Despite difficult publicity and negative narratives about their work, staff have continued to do their best to keep children and vulnerable adults safe, and to help people live fulfilling lives in their communities.

This report presents a balanced picture: it is honest about the failures and the work that still needs to be done, but it also recognises the positive outcomes and successes achieved for individuals across Gwynedd. I would like to thank the workforce for their hard work and commitment, and for helping the social services to continue to improve, strengthen and develop.



Dylan Owen

Statutory Director of Social Services

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR ...

4,278 $\Downarrow$ 225 ADULT CONTACTS 	8,069 $\Uparrow$ 284 CHILD REFERRALS 	540 $\Uparrow$ 163 MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS 
NUMBER RECEIVING A TELECARE SERVICE (31.03.26)  1,600 $\Uparrow$ 72	% RECEIVING SERVICE THROUGH DIRECT PAYMENTS (MARCH 2026)  20% $\Uparrow$ 3%	293 $\Uparrow$ 12 CHILDREN IN CARE 
THE NUMBER OF HOURS OF HOME CARE THAT IS PROVIDED PER WEEK ...  8,754 $\Uparrow$ 421	... HOWEVER 62 $\Uparrow$ 12  INDIVIDUALS ARE STILL WAITING OVER 28 DAYS FOR HOME CARE	NUMBER OF ADULTS IN A RESIDENTIAL OR NURSING HOME (31.03.26)  833 $\Uparrow$ 47
96% $\Downarrow$ 1% OF CASE CONFERENCES WHERE THE CHILD'S VOICE / OPINION WAS HEARD (Aged 5+) 	94% $\Uparrow$ 2% OF ADULT SAFEGUARDING REFERRALS RESPONDED TO WITHIN 7 DAYS	292 $\Uparrow$ 29* NUMBER OF CARERS ASSESSED  *Incorrectly stated in the 2024/25 Report
143 $\Downarrow$ 20 YOUNG CARERS RECEIVING SUPPORT (Provided by Action for Children) 	98% $\Uparrow$ 6% OF REFERRALS TO THE INTAKE TEAM THAT WERE RESPONDED TO WITHIN THE STATUTORY TIMESCALE (24 HOURS)	 NUMBER OF ADULTS WHO HAVE A CARE PLAN (31.03.26) 2,296 $\Downarrow$ 197

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR ...

This year has been a busy one, and it is good to recognise the hard work of the workforce...

MAY
2025

APPOINTMENT OF A NEW HEAD OF ADULTS

A new Head of Department, Mari Wynne Jones, was appointed to the Adults Department following the retirement of the previous Head.

JULY
2025

EVENT TO PROMOTE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

We collaborated with Men at Work to support education for young men about healthy relationships, including a multi-agency event for field workers.

AUGUST
2025

FREE CHILDCARE OFFER EXTENDED

The *Flying Start* provision was successfully extended across Gwynedd.

OCTOBER
2025

SOCIAL SERVICES ON TIKS-TOKS

Over the summer, we launched our new TiksToks account - Gwynedd yn Gwenu. Scroll, like and follow!

JANUARY
2026

A STEP CLOSER TO A NURSING HOME IN PENRHOS

Further funding was secured from the Welsh Government to move forward with plans for a new nursing home and dementia home at the Penrhos site.

MARCH
2026

DEMENTIA ACTIF WINS AN AWARD

Dementia Actif Gwynedd were proud to receive the Community Safety Partner Award from North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, recognising the value of their collaboration in improving the safety and wellbeing of residents.

LAUNCH OF THE NIWRO APP

A new mobile phone app focusing on neurodivergence was launched, with the aim of improving support for individuals and parents.

CONSTRUCTION OF CANOLFAN DOLFEURIG

Good progress was made on the redevelopment of a learning disability services centre in Dolgellau, and it is expected to open in the coming year.



Promoting the Niwro App



Dementia Actif receiving an award

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR ...

OUR BRAVERY BROUGHT JUSTICE

Following the publication of the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Board's report, *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, in the autumn, Cyngor Gwynedd drew up a comprehensive response plan to address the recommendations, along with wider issues identified in inspections and associated investigations. This was a challenging and damning report, and the Council acknowledged that there were important lessons to learn.

A Response Board was established to supervise the work, chaired by Professor Sally Holland, the former Children's Commissioner for Wales. The aim of the Board is to ensure firm progress and give assurances to the Council, elected members and stakeholders that definitive steps are being taken to strengthen safeguarding arrangements and to improve the experiences of children and vulnerable adults in Gwynedd.

Since then, the board has met regularly and have benefited from the input and guidance from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Estyn, Children's Commissioner and Welsh Government. Also considered was the learning from the CIW and Estyn joint-inspection in November 2025. Professor Sally Holland reports every quarter to the Council Cabinet, whilst the Welsh Government's Ministerial Assurance Group also monitors progress against the recommendation.

By March 2026, positive progress was achieved on several of the steps noted. However, work is still to be done, and the Council remains committed to act on the learning and ensure continuous improvements. Rather than repeating what has already been done and what is in the pipeline, a website that provides a simple version and summary of the Board's work programme by theme is available: [Response Plan Programme Board](#)

OTHER CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL SERVICES

In general, it was recognised that the focus on the Our Bravery Brought Justice report and the follow-up had taken up most of the time and resources available over the past year, making it difficult to give equal attention to all areas of social services.

Parhaodd nifer o heriau sylweddol drwy gydol y cyfnod, gan gynnwys:

- Ongoing **financial pressures** (due to rising costs and inflation)
- High number of **vacant posts** and **difficulty recruiting** appropriate staff
- **Negative attitudes** towards the workforce
- **Leadership challenges** within children's services
- **Demographic** changes.

This report will provide a more detailed analysis of those challenges. Moving forward, a better balance of prioritisation and support will need to be achieved in the year ahead.

CONTEXT: LEADERSHIP

Leadership

The past year has been challenging, but also constructive, for the leadership of social services in Gwynedd. The director has now been in his role for three years, giving the service some stability. The leadership and support from Cllr Menna Trenholme and Cllr Dilwyn Morgan, the Cabinet Members with responsibility for children and adult services, has remained stable and positive throughout the year.

In the adult services, a new head of service, Mari Wynne Jones, has been appointed. She is an experienced social worker who has spent her career in Gwynedd and knows the area and its people very well. She has exciting and constructive plans for the Adults Department.



Y In the children's services, following the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report, two senior officers took on the role of Head of Department for nearly a year. They successfully fulfilled this role, and the Council and Director are very grateful for their contribution. By the end of the year, it was agreed that this arrangement was not sustainable, and an interim head of service was initially appointed in April 2026.

Towards the end of the year, a meeting was held with the Heads of Department and the Assistant Head of the service responsible for commissioning a business to consider longer-term plans for social services. The focus was on ensuring that the service structure was accurate, appropriate and viable for the future. It was agreed that further discussion was needed over the coming months and years.

Scrutiny and Challenge Arrangements

Governance, scrutiny and challenge arrangements are a key part of ensuring accountability and quality of services. The Leader and Cabinet set the strategic direction of the Council, with progress regularly monitored through performance meetings with Cabinet Members and senior management.

Democratic scrutiny plays a central role in providing a constructive challenge and ensuring transparency. The Care Scrutiny Committee monitors the performance of services, questions progress and ensures that risks, challenges and opportunities for improvement are properly addressed.

During the year, performance reports and data dashboards were regularly presented to the Scrutiny Committee to enable members to bring services to account for and monitor key trends. The Committee's work programme is planned in advance to ensure that important strategic issues and priorities are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.

CONTEXT: THE WORKFORCE

The Workforce: Strength at the Heart of the Service

Cyngor Gwynedd continues to maintain a strong social care workforce, **with around 1,500 directly employed staff** including social workers, domiciliary and residential care staff, team managers and administrative support functions. Through partnerships with independent providers and the third sector, **the total workforce supporting social care provision increases to around 3,000 people.**

The significant dedication, professionalism and resilience of the workforce over the year is seen despite increasing external pressures. Feedback from service users and their families continues to reflect an appreciation of the commitment and kindness of staff across the service.

Gwynedd remains the only authority in North Wales that does not use agency social workers, a situation that has been maintained for over a decade. All other authorities in the region, along with the vast majority of councils across Wales, now rely on agency staff to some extent. While this is something to celebrate, it becomes an increasingly significant challenge every year.

During the director's visits to the workforce throughout the year, the challenging context is reflected, particularly in terms of recruitment, increased workloads and more complex cases. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the strength of the service lies in its people: from individuals who have been committed to the sector for over 40 years to those who have just finished school and are starting their career through the Care Academy. The same level of enthusiasm, dedication and pride in the work can be seen, and sincere thanks are extended to them for their continued contribution.

Words of Appreciation

Every day, the dedication and care of the workforce has a positive impact on people's lives. The following quotes provide an insight into that difference:



"I wanted to put in writing how much I have appreciated my Support Worker after my mental breakdown. I have met him every Friday since coming out of hospital and he has worked with me for 18 months on my long road to recovery. He has been the kindest, most compassionate person I have ever worked with in such a position.

He has been patient and understanding ... after a long stay in hospital many like me feel vulnerable and anxious just doing the most basic of tasks. He has understood in many ways about my age factor and I am not able to do things younger people can do. My working relationship with him has been like a brother and I will never forget his compassion and caring nature which is so needed in a job such as this."

Thanks to a Support Worker, Mental Health Team

CONTEXT: THE WORKFORCE



"Your belief in us and your willingness to give us the opportunity has made a life changing difference to us all. Knowing that you listened to us, supported us and treated us with respect helped us stay strong during moment that felt overwhelming.

Your dedication to your work and to our family did not go unnoticed, and I will always be thankful for the role you played during this time. Thank you again for everything you have done. Your support has truly meant the world to us."

Thanks to a Social Worker, Children's Services



"We would like to thank, as a family, from the bottom of our hearts, all the staff at Plas Maesincla for their gentle and tireless care of Mum since she came to you. We are extremely proud that she spent her final years at Plas Maesincla, where she was treated with respect and dignity. She received the best possible care. The family and homely atmosphere, together with the warm welcome given to families, is a special feature of the home."

Thanks to the care workers at the residential home, Plas Maesincla



"I just want to thank you for everything you have done for my children they have the best carers and they are thriving"

Thanks to the Children's Services

Workforce Well-being

Staff well-being has been a growing area of concern over the past year, with negative trends emerging on social media particularly towards front-line staff working under increasing pressure. Staff well-being has been a growing area of concern over the past year, with negative trends emerging on social media particularly towards front-line staff working under increasing pressure.

However, these measures also reflect a wider pattern of an increase in negative reactions by some members of the public towards services. During the year, there were incidents of personally targeting individuals within the workforce on social media platforms, particularly Facebook. This type of behaviour has had a significant impact on individuals and their families and has raised serious concerns about the emotional well-being of staff.

As a result of this, the Council is developing specific policy and guidance to support staff and managers to respond consistently and appropriately to such incidents, including clarity on reporting processes, provision of support to individuals, and safeguarding measures.

CONTEXT: THE WORKFORCE



Academi Gofal (Care Academy) Gwynedd

The Academi Gofal Gwynedd offers a wide range of development opportunities, including work experience, site visits, trainee roles, and developmental pathways for existing staff. The first cohort of trainees have now been on the scheme for a year and the feedback on their work has been consistently positive. One individual left the scheme to start a nursing course but still works occasionally within the Learning Disabilities day service. The other five are well settled in their long-term placements.

During the year, six new trainees were recruited, one to Hafan y Sêr, two to Plas Pawb, and three to the Adult Services. A new recruitment approach was used this year with a greater emphasis on practical experience and the specific needs of services. Interviews were conducted in real work settings, including a nursery, residential homes and care units, to give applicants a better understanding of the nature of the work. Following the interview process, an additional recruitment event and one-to-one conversations were held to support unsuccessful applicants to take advantage of other opportunities in the sector.

We have also been able to develop retainer schemes in conjunction with Anglesey Council and Bangor University for MA Social Work students, as well as offering a retainer to an Occupational Therapy student in Cardiff. It is intended to build on this approach in the future as a way to strengthen the workforce and increase numbers within the sector.

The Academy in numbers...

150 career events to promote the Academy

110 work experience placements arranged

51 Applied for the 2025/26 Care Academy

11 Trainees now part of the Care Academy

44 declared interest through SOS Carers website

4 Staff members supported to follow a degree course

CONTEXT: MORE THAN JUST WORDS

The Council continues to take a strong lead in its use of Welsh, with services operating internally through the medium of Welsh and the active offer being implemented with everyone who comes into contact with the service. The offer is strengthened further through the work of the Gwynedd More than Just Words Group to **develop and publish videos** that highlight the positive impact of using Welsh on individuals.

Although there are challenges in recruiting Welsh-speaking staff in some fields, such as occupational therapy, the Council is investing significantly in developing the language skills of existing staff. **62 staff members attended language courses during the year, including new learners, increasing skills and language refresher courses.**

Gwynedd continues to be innovative in the field of digital change, ensuring that the Welsh language is central to systems developments. An example of this is the transition from WCCIS to Mosaic. Although Mosaic was originally an English language system, Cyngor Gwynedd took the lead to ensure that it was available in Welsh before its adoption, setting a national standard that other counties can follow.

A range of other projects contribute to the promotion of the natural and daily use of Welsh, including improvements in Telecare, support for people with Dementia, the development of children's small group homes, as well as initiatives such as the Niwro App, podcasts and the Trelar Chwarae (activities for children).

The Council is ready to challenge partners to ensure that they also fully implement the Active Offer. Recently, a concern was raised with Care Inspectorate Wales about the lack of Welsh language inspectors in some care home inspections. Some inspectors were unable to communicate in Welsh with residents or staff, and in some cases they asked for feedback and comments in English only. The matter has been formally raised with the Inspectorate and the Commissioner, as this practice does not reflect the Active Offer or support effective inspections that ensure a full and equal voice for residents and the workforce.

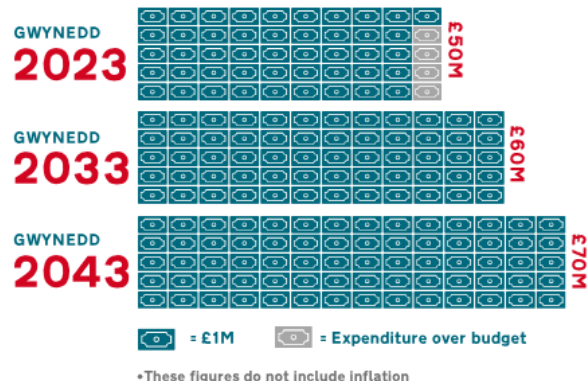


CONTEXT: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The 2025/26 revenue budget shows that Gwynedd Social Services manages a gross budget of **£148m** (£112m for Adult Services and £36m in Children's Services), reflecting the size and importance of these services within the local economy of the county.

The **Llechen Lân research** was published, which was conducted to plan for the long-term needs of social services. The research shows that demographic changes will place significant pressure on services, with forecasts indicating a substantial increase in demand and cost by 2043. The need for additional investment was identified in September 2024, and additional corporate funding was successfully secured during 2025/26 to help respond to these increasing pressures.

THE FUNDING NEEDED TO PROVIDE HOME, RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING CARE



In March 2025, the national population forecasts were received, and the research will be further updated based on new population data. It is suggested that it will show even higher demand levels than previously predicted.

This year, permanent additional funding of over £600k was provided to support additional posts in the Children's Department, to respond to the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report and strengthen child protection arrangements. Opportunities were taken to develop services through national and regional grants, including the Regional Integration Fund (RIF), which has enabled new and innovative schemes. These grants are short term in nature and as the RIF comes to an end, early planning for the future is required, which adds further challenges to financial planning and ensures the sustainability of services.

Extra Costs

By the end of the year, the Adults Department and the Children's Department had both spent above their budgets. This did not stem from unnecessary spending, but rather from the need to meet the needs of individuals in complex, urgent and often very costly situations.

The most pronounced financial pressures were within the Children's Services, with an overspend of £3.4M. The main factor was the high cost of specialist out-of-county placements, which often arise unexpectedly and are difficult to plan in advance, and which in some cases are unavoidable. This pressure prompted the Council to accelerate work on the development of small group homes, as part of the aim to strengthen local provision. A dedicated role was created to support and accelerate this programme during 2026/27.

Similarly, the Adults Department is overspending by £1.4M as a result of increased demand for care in private residential homes. This is partly linked to staffing challenges in the Council's residential homes, which have reduced capacity and led to costly external provision. There has also been an unusual increase in the number of individuals with mental health needs requiring residential care, alongside ongoing pressures on home care services, particularly in rural and hard-to-serve areas.

CONTEXT: COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK

The Council continues to develop and strengthen its commissioning arrangements to ensure sustainable, high-quality care and support services that meet the needs of the people of Gwynedd. During the year, there was a particular focus on implementing the requirements of the National Commissioning Framework, responding to changes in the procurement landscape, and strengthening our relationships with care providers.

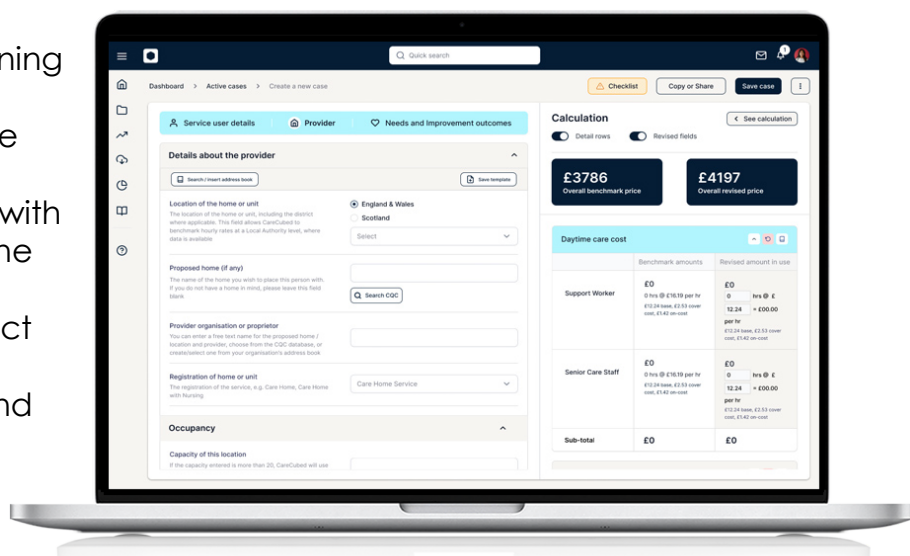
National resources are used to support the implementation of the Commissioning Framework, including the national self-assessment tool. This work has identified areas where our arrangements are strong, as well as highlighting areas where there are further opportunities for development in implementing the requirements of the Code of Practice. During the year, there was a need to respond to legislative changes in the procurement field to ensure that our commissioning approaches remain consistent and compliant with requirements.

One of the most significant developments has been the work to strengthen the relationship between the Council and care providers. Discussions and consultations regarding 2026/27 fees began several months in advance across a range of services, including home care, residential and nursing care, services for older people, and learning disability services. This approach has enabled more open and productive discussions, building on lessons learned over recent years.

Detailed data and evidence are used to inform fee-setting decisions, including the use of the CareCubed model to understand providers' individual care costs. Where providers are able to demonstrate that the cost of delivering care is higher than the rates planned within the Council's budgets, further discussions take place to consider the evidence and financial implications before a decision is made. This approach has contributed to a more constructive and transparent relationship with providers, creating a stronger foundation for collaboration despite the financial challenges facing both the sector and the Council.

The Council continues to support the Welsh Government's commitment to the Real Living Wage. The funding provided for this purpose has been fully reflected in the inflation rates proposed to providers for 2026/27. Although some providers have expressed concerns that the level of funding does not reflect wider wage pressures within their organisations, the Council is able to demonstrate that the funding transferred is sufficient to deliver the policy commitment for eligible workers.

Looking ahead, the Council will continue to develop its commissioning approach, focusing on ensuring sustainable services that deliver the best outcomes for the people of Gwynedd. It plans to work closely with providers, regional partners, and the Welsh Government to ensure that commissioning arrangements reflect local needs, are evidence-based, and contribute to a robust care and support system for the future.



PEOPLE VOICE AND CONTROL

- All people are equal partners who have choice, voice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them."
- "Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision."

SNAPSHOT IN NUMBERS:

129  INDIVIDUALS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY ON THE PATHWAY TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT	96%  OF CASE CONFERENCES WHERE THE CHILD'S VOICE / OPINION WAS HEARD (Aged 5+)	20  "HELPU'N HUN" REPORTS PRODUCED PER MONTH VIA THE COUNCIL WEBSITE	NUMBER RECEIVING A HOME CARE SERVICE (MARCH 2026) 811 
% RECEIVING SERVICE THROUGH DIRECT PAYMENTS (MARCH 2026) 20% 	NUMBER RECEIVING A TELECARE SERVICE (31.03.26) 1,600 	NUMBER OF ADULTS WHERE AN INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL ADVOCATE WAS PROVIDED 82 	NUMBER WAITING OVER 28 DAYS FOR HOME CARE (MARCH 2026) 62 

THE VALUE OF TELECARE AND ROBOTICS: ELEN'S STORY



Elen was living in a Learning Disability Residential Home and often felt sad and uncertain.



Sometimes her anxiety presented as challenging or difficult behaviour.



Staff considered a gentle way to support Elen and help her cope.



Through the Telecare Service, a robotic cat was introduced into the care home.



Elen began stroking the cat, feeding it and caring for it. The cat was given a name – “Pearl”.



Caring for “Pearl” gives Elen a sense of responsibility and purpose. She is much happier in the home.

PEOPLE: VOICE AND CONTROL

Voice of the Child

The *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report highlighted weaknesses where the Council did not consistently act to listen to the voice of abused children. Following a review, social services in Gwynedd strengthened their commitment to ensure that children's voices are always heard. Social workers now regularly visit children involved in safeguarding allegations in order to listen to their views, with parental consent where appropriate and if the parents are not part of the original allegation.

Children's voices and priorities should be at the heart of Councils' decisions as they are the future of our communities. During the year, a new Voice of the Child Strategy was developed under the guidance of the Education Department, with input from the Gwynedd Youth Forum.

How can we do things better?

While the Forum continues to grow from strength to strength, it is recognised that the current approach is not sustainable or consistently reaching all children, especially those who do not engage through formal structures. To support this, we plan to recruit a new role to reach more voices, including looked after children and other children known to social services in early 2026/27.



"The Right Way" Workshop, Children's Commissioner's Office

The Right Way – Embedding Children's Rights

During the year, work was carried out to explore the possibility of UNICEF's "Child Friendly Cities" accreditation, reflecting the approach adopted by Cardiff Council. However, it became clear that there is no longer any local support or national structure available to support a move towards accreditation, following the end of the UNICEF UK pilot in June 2025.

As a result, the focus has shifted to alternative approaches to achieve the same objectives. "The Right Way" by the Office of the Children's Commissioner has been adopted as the main national framework, focusing on embedding children's rights (UNCRC) in all aspects of policy, planning and services. In February 2026, a "The Right Way" workshop was held for Cabinet Members, Scrutiny Chairs, the Senior Management Team and the Gwynedd Youth Forum with the aim of raising awareness and strengthening understanding of the principles. A further work programme is in place for 2026/27.

PEOPLE: VOICE AND CONTROL

Corporate Parenting Panel

The Council acts as the corporate parent of looked after children, with the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting quarterly to provide an overview, challenge and assurance of the quality of services provided. The panel is made up of Cabinet Members, senior officers, the Director, the Chief Executive and representatives from the Health Board.

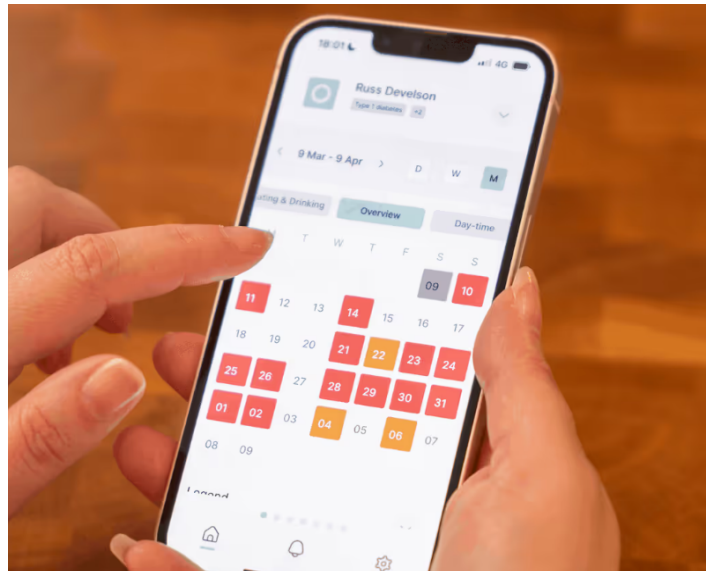
In April 2025, the Panel submitted a report to Cabinet on the implementation of the Welsh Government's Corporate Parenting Charter, confirming that the Council is working positively towards meeting the charter's expectations. Strengthening the voice of looked after children has been a key priority. An individual with lived experience of the care system now sits as a member of the Panel, ensuring that the direct experiences of children and young people inform discussions, challenge and supervision.

During 2026/27, a review of the Corporate Parenting Strategy is planned, ensuring that looked after children are central to the work. The strategy will be informed by the voice and experiences of children and young people in care and care leavers.

Adults: Independence Promotion Services Team

During the year, a new Independence Promotion Services Team was established to bring together the areas of direct payments, telecare, assistive technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and development of micro companies.

The aim of the work is to ensure that individuals get the support, technology and choices they need to live as independently as possible, in line with their wishes and circumstances.



How can we do things better?

The target of ensuring that no person waited more than 28 days for a domiciliary care package following an assessment was not achieved. Although workforce challenges contributed to this, performance indicates that more needs to be done to ensure that people receive the right support at the right time.

This highlights the need to accelerate the implementation of the recommendations of the **Llechen Lân: The Future of Older People's Services report**, with a focus on ensuring that the alternatives are offered consistently across the county. As well as promoting voice and choice for individuals, this approach contributes to reducing the demand for traditional care and increases the flexibility of support available.

PEOPLE: VOICE AND CONTROL

Telecare, Technology and AI

Individuals and their families can now apply directly for telecare equipment through the Council's website, facilitating faster and easier access to support. At the same time, the work of transferring residents from analogue systems to digital technology is gathering pace. The Council works closely with the housing associations (Adra and Grŵp Cynefin) to ensure a smooth and safe transition for residents.

A virtual occupational therapy tool is now live on the website and is increasingly being used by residents. Currently, **around 20 users generate reports each month**, enabling individuals to self-assess and explore support needs independently from their homes. It is estimated that this use **could have saved around 200 additional referrals**, demonstrating its potential impact in improving early access to information and support, and reducing the need for formal intervention in the early stages.

See how further advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are starting to transform the way services operate as well. The Beam Notes (formerly Magic Notes) pilot was a success with a cohort of staff during early 2026, and it is planned to extend the use of the technology across the service during 2026/27.

Technology such as Beam Notes helps reduce the time spent on administrative and recording work, freeing up more time for social workers to focus on working directly with individuals and families.

Beam Notes pilot in figures...

3.38 hours

time saved per staff member per week (average)

61%

reduction in care assessment completion time

35%

improvement in the accuracy and detail of case notes

95%

of staff who reported a reduction in administrative time

Direct Payments

The use of direct payments continues to steadily increase, **with 20% of residents now receiving their support through this method, compared to 17% in 2024/25.**

While progress has been slow, it reflects a positive shift towards giving individuals more voice, choice and control over the way their care and support is provided.

All new direct payments packages now include an offer of an employment card, although changing the long-standing arrangements of individuals who have used direct payments for years remains a challenge in some cases. During the year, some difficulties were experienced with the current employment card provider, and work is underway to research alternative providers to ensure a more reliable service and better choice for users.

PEOPLE: VOICE AND CONTROL

Learning Disability: Extending Work Opportunities

Promoting work opportunities and paid employment remains a key priority within the Learning Disability service, recognising the importance of work in terms of individuals' independence, confidence, social connections and well-being. The Learning Disability Career Pathway Coordinator operates across Gwynedd and Anglesey, with the support of three Support Officers who work specifically to promote employment opportunities and support individuals towards paid employment and fair pay.

The year saw a further increase in the number of individuals taking part in the programme, with 129 now on the pathway to work. Presentations to the Council's management network have generated positive interest. During the period, two individuals managed to secure posts within the Council, demonstrating that the work of raising awareness and creating opportunities is beginning to bear fruit.



The work has also gained national recognition, with the team being invited to present at the IMPACT "Improving Adult Care Together" conference in Cardiff. This was an opportunity to share Gwynedd's good practice, showcasing the innovative approach to supporting people with learning disabilities into meaningful work, and strengthening the county's profile as a leader in the field.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Team

The Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Team supports staff to understand individuals' unique needs and methods of communication, recognising that behaviour is often a way of expressing feelings or unmet needs. The team helps staff respond in ways that are person-centred and focused on wellbeing.

Through a combination of training, practical modelling and consultancy work, the team has helped staff to better understand what matters to the people they support, strengthen relationships and develop more person-centred approaches to care. The team's intensive coaching model, which involves working closely alongside teams within their own environments, has been particularly effective. As a result, improved communication and understanding have contributed to enhanced wellbeing, greater opportunities for choice, and an increased sense of control over daily life for the people receiving support.



"Once we understood the reasons behind the behaviour, we stopped trying to manage it and started supporting the need behind it. The change has been incredible."

Feedback from a Service that received training from the PBS Team.

WHAT PROGRESS WAS MADE AGAINST LAST YEAR'S COMMITMENTS?

Last year's commitments	Progress
Reduce our waiting lists for new domiciliary care packages and ensured that no person in Gwynedd waits longer than 28 days following a care assessment.	
Develop our use of technology to support care and independence, promoted the Telecare service, and explored the potential of robotics.	
Child-friendly Gwynedd: In the coming year we will take a closer look at UNICEF's "Child Friendly Cities" scheme.	
Officially adopt the Welsh Government's Parenting Charter working to strengthen the voice of looked after children.	
It is planned to revisit the resource needed to ensure that Dewis is accessible, promoted across the county and effectively meets the needs of residents	

2026/27 COMMITMENTS

1. Recognising that the service has not achieved its targets this year, we will continue to work to **reduce our waiting lists for new domiciliary care packages** and ensure that **no person in Gwynedd waits more than 28 days following** a care assessment.
2. We will work with the Education Department to **adopt and implement the Voice of the Child Strategy**, continuing to embed an approach that promotes children's rights and supports Gwynedd's vision as a child-friendly county.
3. We will appoint a **dedicated Participation Officer** to strengthen the voice and involvement of children and young people with care experience, disabled children, and other groups who require additional support to ensure their views inform services and decision-making
4. We will **expand the use of Beam Notes across Social Services** to reduce the time spent on administrative tasks, free up more time for staff to work directly with individuals, and support more effective ways of working.
5. We will **update the Llechen Lan report** following the publication of new demographic projections, and continue to implement its recommendations with a focus on developing preventative approaches and reducing reliance on traditional care services.
6. We will work with children in care and young people with care experience to **update the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy**, ensuring it provides clear direction for the Council in its role as a corporate parent.

The list of strategic priorities in the Council Plan is set out here: [A Caring Gwynedd](#)

PREVENTION

- “The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best outcomes for people are achieved.”
- “Resilience within communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including carers to learn develop and participate in society.”

SNAPSHOT IN NUMBERS:

NUMBER OF CARERS ASSESSED 292 	 305 RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM DEMENTIA ACTIF	245 NUMBER OF RE-ENABLEMENT PACKAGES COMPLETED DURING THE YEAR 	510* NEW ASSESSMENTS WHERE NEEDS WERE MET WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A CARE PLAN (out of a total of 2,135)
143 YOUNG CARERS RECEIVING SUPPORT 	162  RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM THE GAFAEL LLAW TEAM	482 NEW CARERS SUPPORTED BY CARERS OUTREACH	133 YOUNG CARERS USING THE AiDi APP 

TROBWyNT TEAM AND EARLY INTERVENTION: ANNIE'S STORY



Annie was living in a hostel and going through a difficult period in her life, with a dependency on alcohol and drugs.



Annie became pregnant. Her older children were already in care, and the baby was placed on the Child Protection Register before birth.



Annie received intensive support from the Trobwynt Team over several months.



Annie's life gradually changed – no alcohol or drugs, and a supportive relationship.



There were doubts about whether Annie would be able to keep her baby, but she demonstrated that she was able to provide safe and loving care.



The child was removed from the Child Protection Register. Annie's story shows what is possible when the right support is in place.

PREVENTION

Supporting Our Carers

According to the 2021 Census, **around 10,500 people in Gwynedd (9% of the population) are unpaid carers**. Supporting their health and wellbeing is a key priority for Social Services, with support commissioned through *Carers Outreach* for adults and *Action for Children* for children and young people. During 2025/26, 482 new adult unpaid carers and 143 children accessed this support. However, more needs to be done to ensure carers are appropriately identified and supported. This was highlighted in the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales report, **Are we caring for our carers? Revisited**, which reviewed local authority arrangements.

Local data shows that challenges remain. Only **71 (4%)** of all assessments completed during the year were carer assessments, with a further **221 (12.6%)** joint assessments where the carer's needs were considered alongside the needs of the person receiving care. While no one was waiting for a carer assessment at the end of March 2026, a significant number of carers were supported directly by *Carers Outreach* without having a statutory assessment. This suggests a need to strengthen arrangements to identify carers earlier and more consistently.

Work is underway locally and regionally to respond to these challenges. This includes developing a local carers action plan, improving information and advice, raising awareness of carers' rights and assessments, supporting staff who are unpaid carers, and developing more flexible respite opportunities. In addition, under the chair of the Director of Social Services in Gwynedd, a regional group is leading the development of a new North Wales strategy to improve how carers are identified, assessed and supported, ensuring greater consistency across the region.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to strengthen the early identification and support of carers, increasing the use of carer assessments. Emergency planning should also be enhanced, ensuring that clear contingency arrangements are in place if a carer is temporarily unable to provide care. Further work will be undertaken on the Mosaic data system to improve the recording of emergency plans, and to expand the use of the Message in a Bottle scheme, which provides a simple way to record essential information for emergency situations.

Falls Protocol

A clear falls protocol ensures a consistent, safe and timely response to individuals who have fallen, supporting appropriate decision-making and helping to prevent or reduce unnecessary interventions. During the year, discussions were held with Winnicare regarding the iStumble app, a digital tool that supports an effective response to falls. While the app offers significant benefits and is much easier to use than paper-based versions, it is not currently available in Welsh, which limits its use in Gwynedd.

As a result, a request has been made through national networks to explore the possibility of developing a bilingual version. The issue has also been raised with the national Digital in Social Care (DiSC) programme for further consideration.

PREVENTION

Dementia Actif

Gwynedd Dementia Actif provides activities, information and support to individuals living with dementia and their families. The service helps people to stay active, connected to their communities and to access support after diagnosis, reducing isolation and supporting the well-being and confidence of individuals and carers.

The impact has been significant, and an increase was seen again in the number of people contacting the service: **in March 2026, 305 individuals attended – 55 living with dementia, 61 being unpaid carers, and a further 189 benefited socially.** This demonstrates the value of preventative services in assisting individuals to live independently and to support carers.



“After receiving a diagnosis, the question then is what happens next – what help is available, where to go and who to contact. It is important that people are not left alone... I don't know where I'd be without Gwynedd Dementia Actif”

An unpaid carer who attends Dementia Actif sessions with her husband.



Gwynedd and Anglesey Youth Justice Service

Following an inspection in 2024, an improvement plan was implemented for the Youth Justice Service, with positive progress made in a number of key areas. The governance arrangements and oversight of the management board were strengthened, with improved attendance and participation from partners.

During the year, the use of out-of-court solutions remains strong, with the vast majority of cases resolved without going before the youth court. A decrease was also seen in the percentage of women involved in the system compared to 2024/25. The service has purchased virtual reality headsets that provide realistic training situations to help staff members develop their response skills in challenging situations.

Work continues to strengthen regional collaboration and ensure that victims' voices are appropriately represented. Although some progress has been made in responding to the speech, language and communication needs of children, gaps in therapeutic provision remain and continue to be raised regularly with the health board and regional partners.

PREVENTION



"(The child) was taken off the child protection register and that reminded me that day why we are doing the work and how individuals can change for the better when the right intervention and support is available to them."

Trobwynt Team Member

Supporting Families: Trobwynt and Team Around the Family

Family Support Services continue to work towards ensuring that every child has the best possible opportunity to thrive within their family and community. This approach is based on the principle of fairness – recognising that not all children and families start from the same place, and therefore different levels of support need to be provided according to individual circumstances and needs.

While the number of looked after children has increased, and care will always be a vital option when safeguard a child, our aim is to increase the likelihood that children can remain safely at home, where appropriate, by providing the right support at the right time.

During the year, there were 77 children in child protection processes at the start of the Trobwynt Team intervention, with the aim of supporting them to stay at home with their families. The intervention was successful for 64 of these children, demonstrating the value of providing support tailored to the needs of each family.

How can we do things better?

The increasing demand on children's services highlights the need to continue strengthening and investing much more in preventative and early intervention services. By intervening earlier and targeting resources effectively, we can reduce the need for more intensive and crisis interventions later on and improve outcomes for children and young people across the county.

Trauma Informed

The Council continues to develop a trauma-informed approach across its services, recognising the long-term impact of trauma and the need to provide support in a way that avoids re-traumatisation. A number of teams have identified the positive impact of the training provided, reporting changes in both their understanding and their approach to working with individuals.

The clear corporate intention is to further develop this work, and the Council continues to operate in line with the national framework by expanding access to training, particularly to front-line staff such as support workers, social workers, contact centre staff and homelessness teams. The Social Services Director and Cabinet Member for Children's Services intend to complete the training during 2026/27 to provide guidance.

PREVENTION

Wellbeing Conversations - Gafael Llaw Team

Last year, the Gafael Llaw pilot project was launched in response to the pressures on the Galw Gwynedd service. The project reflects the Council's vision of being a compassionate, kind and empathetic organisation, with an emphasis on person-centred support that focuses on individuals and their strengths.

By proactively reaching out to people who have applied for a Blue Badge, the aim of the work is to identify early signs of need and reduce the likelihood of more intensive interventions being required at a later stage. During 2025/26, 162 residents were supported through the Gafael Llaw Team. Concerns relating to financial pressures, health, wellbeing, loneliness and access to information frequently emerged, and a wide range of support was offered to individuals. Despite staffing capacity challenges, training sessions were delivered on conducting collaborative conversations and on providing financial advice.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to accelerate the work of aligning the “front door” for adult services to ensure more consistent and effective arrangements for people seeking information, advice and assistance. Progress on this work was delayed during the year and, as a result, it will need to be prioritised during 2026/27.



Men at Work and Healthy Relationships

Online influences, harmful content and stereotypes about relationships and sex are having an increasing impact on children and young people. As a result, there is a need to support professionals to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills required to have open and constructive conversations with young people about healthy relationships, respect, self-image and emotional wellbeing.

In July, under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Education, the “Together for Healthy Relationships” event was held in Bangor. Through contributions from people with lived experience, specialists and partner organisations, the event provided an opportunity to share knowledge, raise awareness of the early signs of harmful relationships, and strengthen collaboration to support young people more effectively.

In addition, a series of further training sessions for staff was commissioned from Men at Work, an organisation founded by Michael Conroy, to provide professionals with greater confidence and practical tools to facilitate constructive conversations with boys and young men. Feedback from staff was very positive, with the training being regarded as a valuable resource in supporting work with young people.

WHAT PROGRESS WAS MADE AGAINST LAST YEAR'S COMMITMENTS?

Last Year's Commitments	Progress
Strengthened support for unpaid carers by ensuring unpaid carers are identified early and receive full support to help them continue in their role without jeopardising their own well-being.	
Re-examined and simplified the "front doors" to create a consistent and simple experience for residents as they access social services.	
Used the LIFT system to identify individuals and families in need, to support them to claim the benefits to which they are entitled, and offer further support to reduce the impact of poverty on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.*	
Reviewed existing arrangements to support the hubs, creating a more sustainable and collaborative model with partners for the future.*	

**These projects are reported on in greater detail through the Supporting People Programme arrangements. The Supporting People Programme Annual Report 2025/26 will be presented to the Cabinet in July.*

2026/27 COMMITMENTS

1. We will **expand the use of the 'message in a bottle' scheme** and have ensured that the new Mosaic system supports the **recording of emergency arrangements for unpaid carers**.
2. We will **adapt our Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service arrangements**, ensuring that the route of access is clear, simple and effective to help residents access social care services.
3. We will expand the **trauma-informed training programme across frontline services** and ensure clear corporate leadership. The Director and the Cabinet Member will complete the training during 2026/27.
4. We will **review strategic structures and arrangements across Social Services** to ensure resources are used in the most effective way, with a greater emphasis on prevention, long-term planning and the sustainability of services.

The list of strategic priorities in the Council Plan is set out here: [A Caring Gwynedd](#)



PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

- *“Effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver sustainable and fully integrated, high-quality outcomes for people”*
- *“People are encouraged to contribute to the planning and delivery of their care and support as equal partners”*

WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD: MAI'S STORY



While Mai, aged 93, was in hospital, concerns were raised about financial abuse and neglect, leading to a safeguarding referral.



The social worker, ward staff, the Safeguarding Unit and the Legal Department worked together to agree the best way forward.



Mai's son wanted to move her far away from her home, but the journey posed a risk to her health.



Although Mai lacked capacity to make the decision, she had always expressed a wish to remain local.



When further concerns were raised, the partners worked together to submit an urgent application to the Court of Protection.



Through effective partnership working, the best outcome for Mai was secured, enabling her to remain in her local area in line with her wishes and wellbeing.

PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Working with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Over half of the Community Resource Teams are now co-located with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board staff, with these arrangements strengthening collaboration and supporting integrated work across health and social care. While the collaboration is generally positive, further work is needed to ensure that systems and processes fit together effectively, and specific workshops have been planned to support this.

During the year, Cyngor Gwynedd and the Health Board developed a live information dashboard for individuals at Ysbyty Gwynedd who need to return home with support. This work, along with the discharge safety arrangements over the winter period, has been very successful, with the associated data systems now being refined and shared regionally across the Health Board.

There are also ongoing challenges regarding Continuing Healthcare decisions and cost-sharing arrangements under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act. During the year, social services funded legal support to challenge several cases, and this has already contributed to better collaboration in some fields.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to strengthen data-sharing arrangements with the Health Board across Social Services. There have been recent challenges in the areas of Corporate Parenting and Children Looked After in obtaining data from the Health Board. This issue is intended to be raised with the Chair of the Board to ensure more reliable and consistent arrangements for information sharing in the future.

Derwen: Disabled Children's Integrated Team

Derwen is one of Gwynedd Social Services' key services supporting disabled children and their families and is seen as a positive and valuable service by users. However, the demand and intensity of work have increased significantly over the past few years, putting increasing pressure on the workforce. This increase is reflected in the number of children receiving disability benefits and pupils with Additional Learning Needs in Gwynedd.

The results of two key pieces of work that commenced in 2025/26 are expected:

1. A review of access and practice is examining the Derwen criteria and its working arrangements, with the aim of improving the efficiency of the service and responding to demand.
2. The Llechen Las research considering the current and long-term needs of disabled children in Gwynedd, and the implications of this for education, social care, and housing adaptations.

Due to the scale and complexity of the work, the timelines for both pieces of work have slipped slightly, and the outcomes are expected to be reported during 2026/27.

The service continues to face ongoing challenges in relation to workforce capacity and the availability of social workers. In response, a five-year workforce plan has been developed in an effort to ensure a skilled workforce, and its implementation will begin over the coming year in collaboration with the Gwynedd Care Academy.

PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Cydweithio efo Mantell Gwynedd

Working with the third sector to ensure that social services in Gwynedd are effective, appropriate and relevant to local people is essential.

Mantell Gwynedd provides an effective co-ordination service and support to the third sector in Gwynedd, and a new Compact has been developed through partnership working and consultation and is expected to be presented to the Council's Cabinet for approval in 2026/27.



Yn cefnogi grwpiau gwirfoddol a chymunedol
Supporting voluntary and community groups

It would be wrong for us not to note the success of the partnership, and for that to be reflected in the words of Mantell Gwynedd itself:



"It is true to note that the relationship has improved significantly, and these changes have led to more open and constructive discussions. This, in turn, has led to new projects that improve circumstances and opportunities for some of the County's most vulnerable individuals.

With regular meetings between the Statutory Director of Social Services and Mantell Gwynedd it has led to the identification of opportunities for collaboration, and a better understanding of how the third sector can contribute to Cyngor Gwynedd's aims and objectives. These conversations have been lost in the past.

An example of how the discussions have led to better collaboration is the Ffrindia Newydd project. The Council recognised restrictions on domiciliary carers in terms of providing medication and Mantell Gwynedd saw ways to resolve some of the restrictions through a buddy project. This resulted in project funding from the SPF fund to pilot a buddy project. The pilot project ends in June 2026 and Mantell Gwynedd has now identified a fund that will be able to support the work in the longer term. Without the collaboration and the pilot, this would not have happened in the first place. Ultimately this has meant improving circumstances for vulnerable individuals in Gwynedd and, at the same time, has benefited volunteers.

Another example is the Helping Hand to Volunteer project. Again, through discussions with Cyngor Gwynedd, the need for a resource that would support vulnerable individuals to volunteer was identified. This project has now supported over 180 individuals with additional needs to volunteer. Lottery funding is now supporting the project for a period of four years. Again, without the collaboration this would not have happened."

Bethan Williams, Mantell Gwynedd Chief Officer

PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Working with the Housing Department

While collaboration with external partners is important, internal collaboration between Social Services and other Council departments, particularly Housing, is essential.

As noted in last year's Annual Report, the Adults Services and the Housing Department commissioned a joint report to plan the provision of accommodation and long-term care for older people in Gwynedd (Housing LIN Report). There has been some delay in the work, but an initial draft of the report has now been received. The aim of the work is to explore current and future needs, inform developments, and create a single comprehensive plan for mapping out future services, including nursing care, dementia care, extra care housing, sheltered housing, supported living and general housing for older people.

Extra care housing is a particularly important area, and is being considered as part of the response to the challenges identified in the report Llechen Lân. The current intention is to develop three new extra care housing schemes in Gwynedd, namely in Caernarfon, Pwllheli (the Penrhos site currently under development), Bangor and the Dolgellau area. The Housing LIN report will provide an important evidence base for the level and nature of need and support these schemes.

In addition, the Internal Provider Unit has commissioned assessments of all residential homes managed by the Council to assess their current suitability and identify the developments needed to meet future needs. The findings of the internal assessments and Housing LIN report will be merged into one comprehensive plan to determine the type of provision needed, the minimum standards, and the long-term accommodation options for older people across Gwynedd.



MOSAIC: New Data System

As noted in last year's Annual Report, a new system was required as the existing social services data system (WCCIS) is coming to an end. Collaboration took place with local authorities across North Wales to complete the procurement process within a challenging timeframe, and the MOSAIC system has since been purchased. During the year, extensive preparatory work for the transition began, including planning, technical work and workforce preparation. The implementation timetable has now slipped to March 2027. MOSAIC is expected to improve recording, information sharing and communication with residents and partners.

PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Working with the Education Department

The *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report identified some weaknesses in the arrangements for collaboration between the Education Department and Children's Services. Since then, structural changes have been made to strengthen working links between the two departments. The Education Department has established a Schools Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team, and the manager attends Children's Management Team meetings, improving information-sharing and coordination across services.

One example of improved collaboration is the joint commissioning of the NSPCC to deliver training on grooming and exploitation. The training will be delivered in two parts: a basic module for staff, governors and elected members, and a more specialist joint session for social workers, teachers and designated safeguarding persons in schools. The aim is to support more consistent understanding and improve the consistency of responses across services.

Domestic Abuse Service

Approximately **11.1 per 1,000 of Gwynedd's population (1.1%) experience domestic violence every year**, which underlines the need for effective and co-ordinated services.

The need to strengthen collaboration across the Council in the field of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) was noted during the year, including a better understanding of roles and responsibilities and moving towards joint commissioning. This is particularly relevant following Grŵp Cynefin's decision to bring the Gorwel Domestic Abuse Service to an end, and in light of IDVA arrangements, given the UK Government's intention to phase out the functions of Police and Crime Commissioners over the coming years. At present, the Police and Crime Commissioner funds IDVA services in North Wales.

To support this, the Housing Department, through Housing Support Grant funding, has commissioned a comprehensive assessment of existing services and population needs, with the report to be completed by the end of July 2026 to inform the tendering process for the new service. Work is also being undertaken to consider models of good practice, including arrangements in Bridgend.

The Welsh Government is currently undertaking a national consultation on domestic violence services, highlighting differences in funding and delivery models across regions. The consultation is an opportunity to consider greater national consistency in the approaches.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to strengthen the consistent approach to commissioning and delivering VAWDASV services across the Council, as services have to date been commissioned separately without a complete picture of the overall provision. To address this, a cross-departmental Task Group (Housing, Children's Services, Adult Services and Community Safety) has been established to bring the work together, improve coordination, and develop a clearer understanding of the services available.

WHAT PROGRESS WAS MADE AGAINST LAST YEAR'S COMMITMENTS?

Last year's commitments	Progress
Completed the implementation of the new data system, ensuring comprehensive training for the workforce.	
Reviewed and improved the data systems that support hospital discharge, building on the robust relationship while personnel changes take place at a strategic level.	
Review Derwen service arrangements to address waiting times for nursing and psychology assessments, and complete the research to understand the growth in the population of disabled children.	
Resumed and strengthened partnerships with the third sector, including the formulation of a new Compact to establish a clear basis for collaboration.	
Commissioned external researchers to analyse trends and determine additional provision needs in relation to care accommodation.	

2026/27 COMMITMENTS

1. We will continue the preparation and implementation work for the **transition to the new MOSAIC data system** by March 2027.
2. We will **work collaboratively with the Health Board to improve data sharing in relation to children in care**, enabling the Corporate Parenting Panel to make informed decisions.
3. We will receive the findings of the **Derwen access review and the Llechen Las research** and take action to improve the service model.
4. We will develop an **integrated long-term accommodation strategy for older people** across Gwynedd, ensuring a strategic, consistent and sustainable approach to meeting future housing and care needs.
5. In the area of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV), we will **strengthen internal collaboration across the Council, complete the needs assessment, and move forward with preparations to commission a new service** that is more consistent and better coordinated.

The list of strategic priorities in the Council Plan is set out here: [A Caring Gwynedd](#)

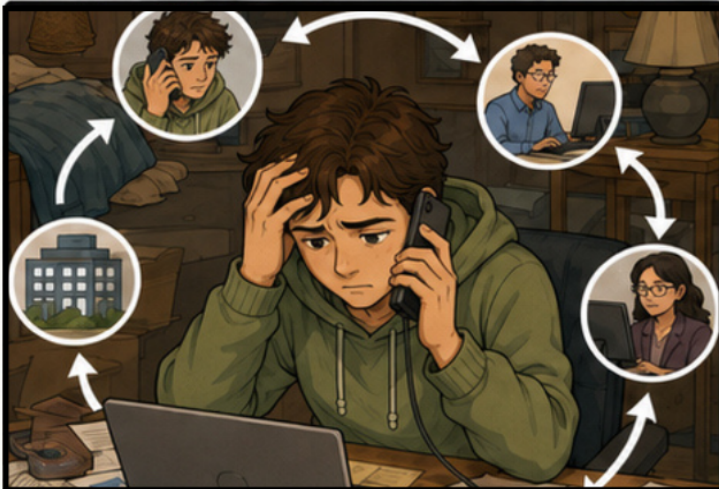
WELL-BEING

- “People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other forms of harm.”
- “People are helped to manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they can reach their full potential and live independently as long as possible.”

SNAPSHOT IN NUMBERS:

293 CHILDREN IN CARE 	84% OF CHILD PROTECTION REFERRALS THAT WERE RESPONDED TO WITHIN THE STATUTORY PERIOD	94% OF ADULT SAFEGUARDING REFERRALS RESPONDED TO WITHIN 7 DAYS	759 INITIAL STRATEGY DISCUSSIONS HELD 
193 OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER PLACEMENT 	319 WAITING FOR A DOLS ASSESSMENT 	8,069 CHILDREN'S REFERRALS 	496 NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ACCESSED SUPPORT FROM THE AUTISM TEAM 

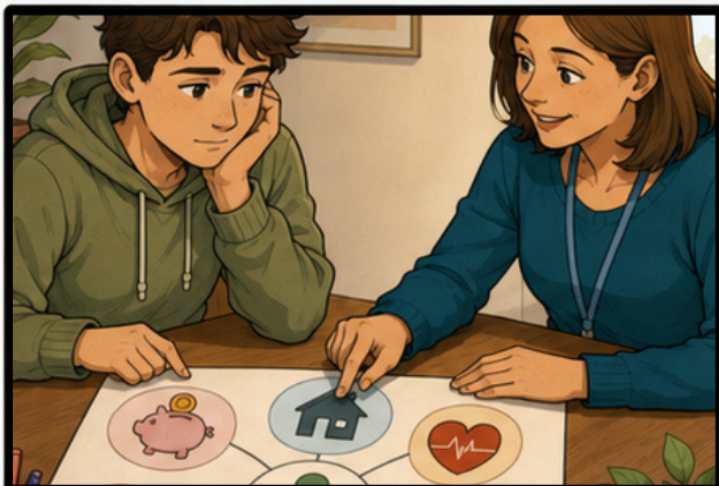
PERSON-CENTERED SUPPORT: ALUN'S STORY



Alun is autistic. He had been seeking support for some time but was being referred between different services without finding the support he needed.



Alun contacted the Autism Team and was given the opportunity to discuss what mattered to him in a face-to-face conversation.



Alun was listened to, and a plan was developed with him. He received support with benefits, housing, changing his GP, and other issues affecting his wellbeing.



A single, consistent point of contact was appointed. Trust was built, and adjustments were made to make communication and meetings easier.



Alun experienced a period of homelessness and had to move home. With advocacy support and by breaking tasks down into small steps, he was able to adapt to his circumstances.



With support, Alun developed greater confidence, independent living skills, and better ways of managing stress and changes in his life.

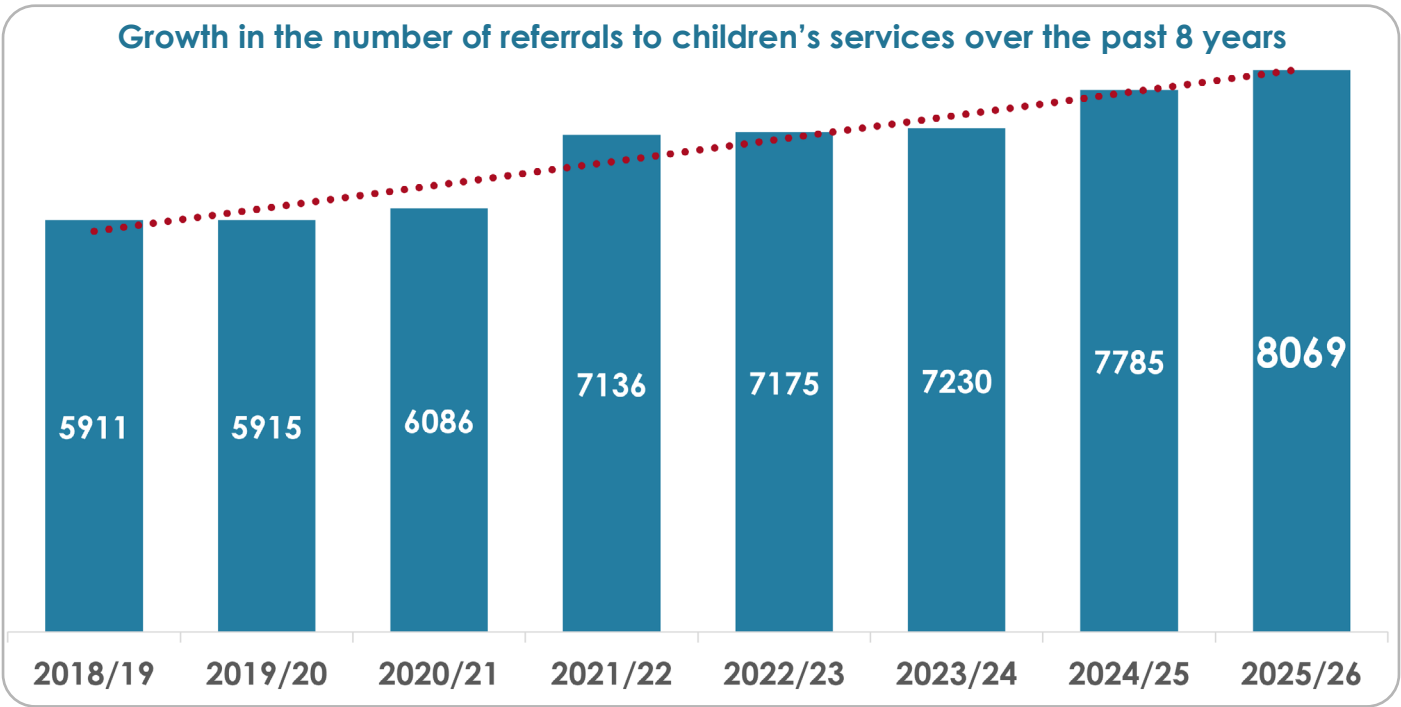
WELL-BEING

Cyfeiriadau Gwasanaethau Plant

There was a significant increase in the number of referrals to Gwynedd Children's Services during the year, although the county's child population is decreasing. Over 8,000 referrals were received – a record number for the Council – putting significant pressure on the workforce and resources. In response, the Council agreed to invest over an additional £600,000 in the next year, enabling the creation of new jobs, including a quality assurance role, to strengthen services and ensure that the voice of the child is at the heart of the work.

This increase may also reflect the positive impact of increasing awareness of safeguarding, with more concerns being identified and referred early. It is essential that concerns are appropriately referred in order to ensure effective safeguarding.

To strengthen the corporate response, a Corporate Safeguarding Champion was appointed to reinforce the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and improve staff awareness, confidence, and compliance with mandatory training. During the year, more accessible training methods, including video format, were developed, with the intention of launching them during 2026/27.



Children's Department: Quality Assurance Framework

One of the positive developments during the year was the introduction of a new quality assurance framework for the Children's Services. The framework sets out a clear vision for the service, explaining its values, purpose and the principles underpinning the work, with a strong emphasis on ensuring that the voice of the child is central.

It also defines the roles and responsibilities of staff within safeguarding and child protection arrangements, strengthening quality assurance methods and providing clearer assurance on the quality of service. It is intended to promote it further to staff and the service over the next year to ensure that it is implemented consistently and effectively across all fields.

WELL-BEING

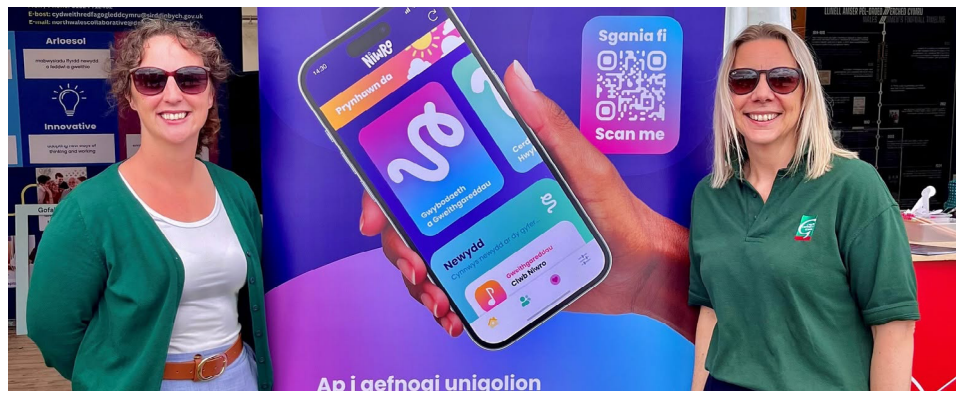
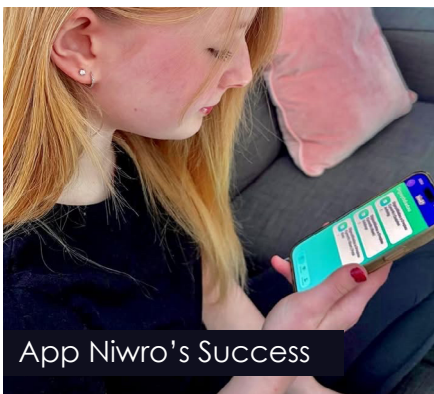
Children in Care

There was an increase in the number of looked after children over the year, with 12 more looked after at the end of the year compared to the previous year. Unregistered placement arrangements (OWR) had to be used for 4 children due to a lack of suitable placements across the United Kingdom. This is not unique to Gwynedd, with many local authorities across Wales and the UK facing the same pressure. As a result, some children are located outside the county, far from their families and local area, in locations that are not always culturally suitable, and which are very costly for the Council.

The development of small group homes across the county is a priority in the Council Plan 2023–28 to enable more children to stay local. Whilst two homes are already operational in Morfa Bychan and Deiniolen, with the children well settled, the original target for opening the home in Edern was not met, as significant refurbishment work needs to be completed on the building. Another house was purchased in Cricieth in the meantime, and the home is going through the registration process with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), with a view to opening during 2026/27.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to accelerate work to strengthen local provision, including expanding fostering opportunities, reducing reliance on high-cost out-of-county placements, and ensuring that more children and young people can remain close to their families, schools, and communities. A dedicated role was created in March 2026 to lead the programme, supporting the Welsh Government's agenda to eliminate profit from children's care.



Ap Niwro

The Gwynedd Autism Team continues to innovate, and the Niwro Cymru App was launched in January 2026 as an accessible and useful resource for families and professionals. The app offers clear and reliable information, soothing activities, details of local events and a wide range of resources and support. Since its launch, it has attracted a significant number of queries and around 1,000 downloads, reflecting a growing demand for this support.

The Autism Team is recognised as a strong and effective team. A working model has attracted attention at regional and national meetings, with interest from nine other counties looking to emulate the approach – it is good to see good practice in Gwynedd recognised and widely shared.

WELL-BEING

The County's Learning Disability Day Services

Day services for people with learning disabilities in Gwynedd have continued to develop significantly during the year, with various models across the county meeting local needs and promoting the well-being of individuals.

In Caernarfon, initiatives such as Siop Galwch Acw and activities at Glynllifon provide opportunities for individuals to develop craft and production skills, as well as contribute to the community through gardening and local environmental maintenance work. Llwybrau Llesiant, funded through the regional grant, focuses on what matters to individuals, offering choice and control over a range of activities such as trips, social clubs, nights out, and discussion groups.

In the Pwllheli and Pen Llŷn area, where transport is an additional challenge, Canolfan y Gwystl continues to be a successful example of a service providing meaningful and productive opportunities. During a recent visit, the dedicated workforce who have supported the service over many years was highlighted, with the centre offering a wide range of activities, including Popty Pysur (a baking and cake sales enterprise), growing potatoes for local sale, along with social and creative clubs.

In Dolgellau, there has been a period of change with the demolition of the Dolfeurig site to enable the development of a new centre. By the end of the year, good progress had been made on the building, which will include a training centre, day service, and community café to be run by individuals who use the service. This development is expected to further strengthen local opportunities and community connections during 2026/27.

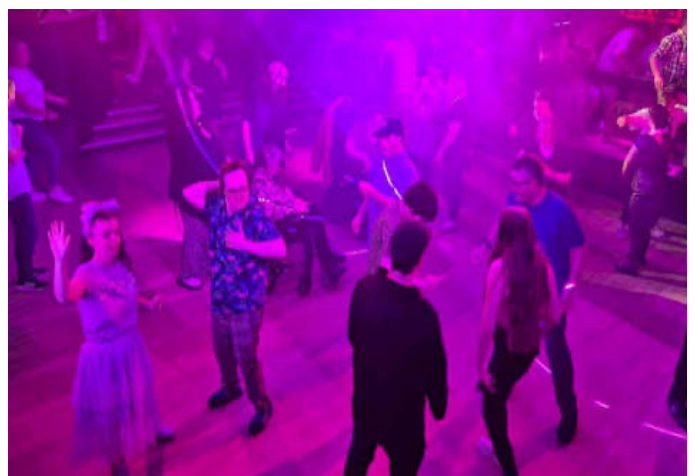


"I will be going to the Trilogy nightclub for the first time ever tonight. It will be great to be able to be in a nightclub atmosphere with the great wellbaing team Llwybrau Llesiant. I would like to thank the amazing crew for all the work they are doing to arrange different activities and sessions. Without them there would not be such excellent opportunities to have in the first place. Thank you very much! "

Llwybrau Llesiant Service User (Learning Disability Team)



Llwybrau Llesiant at Trilogy Nightclub



WELL-BEING

Mental Health Service

In last year's report, the establishment of a new mental health service within Social Services was highlighted. Although the service is not fully integrated with health services, it has been established to work in close partnership with colleagues in the Health Board. The service provides social care and support services rather than medical or clinical treatments.

The team successfully ensured that there was no waiting list for mental health assessments, with the vast majority of individuals being assessed within approximately 10 days and only a small number waiting up to two weeks. In addition, a number of residential placements were commissioned for individuals with mental health needs, ensuring appropriate support was available when required.

Looking ahead, the department is reviewing how the service should develop further, including the role of support workers and care practitioners, in order to ensure the most effective use of available resources and to support people to live as independently as possible within their communities.

How can we do things better?

There are some situations where individuals with complex needs fall between services, leading to delays and discussions about responsibility for their care. This includes cases such as autistic individuals who do not meet the eligibility criteria for learning disability services, young people transitioning into adult services, and complex situations such as hoarding. This highlights the need for improved coordination and collaboration to ensure that individuals receive the appropriate support at the right time.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Assessment Waiting List

During the year, emphasis was placed on ensuring that individuals who lack the capacity to make decisions for themselves are properly protected, whilst respecting their rights when implementing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards arrangements. While these decisions are complex and challenging, it is essential to ensure that individuals are not wrongfully or unlawfully deprived of their liberty. It was noted that the system remains complex, with some delays due to bureaucracy and a lack of progress in legislative developments.

During the year, the Council provided valuable additional investment to the service but faced significant recruitment challenges for a period. By the end of the year, two new members of staff had been recruited, who have now completed their training, qualified, and started their caseload, contributing to an improvement in capacity. As a result, performance has steadily improved, with an increase in the number of authorised cases and a decrease in the waiting list.

As of March 31, 2026, **there were 319 individuals waiting for a DoLS assessment, compared to 356 the previous year.** The aim is to continue to improve the situation, aiming to ensure that no one has to wait more than 21 days for an assessment, by continuing to invest resources and further reducing the backlog.

WHAT PROGRESS WAS MADE AGAINST LAST YEAR'S COMMITMENTS?

Last year's commitments	Progress
The Council will complete the preparation and opening of two additional homes in Dinorwig and Edern, extending the ability to offer local residential care to children with complex needs.	
It is planned to recruit two new Best Interest Assessors to reduce the backlog of DoLS assessments that need to be completed.	
The Council will develop a strategic plan to maintain and upgrade the standards of our residential care homes, ensuring warm, safe and respectful environments for residents.	

2026/27 COMMITMENTS

1. We will use the additional £600k investment to **strengthen capacity within the Children's Department**, including the creation of new posts and the appointment of a dedicated quality assurance manager role.
2. We will **embed the Quality Assurance Framework across all teams in the Children's Department** to ensure a consistent way of working, with a clear emphasis on quality and the voice of the child.
3. We will **accelerate the implementation of the "eliminating profit" agenda** by expanding sustainable in-house provision, including the development of local fostering and increasing the provision of small group homes across the county.
4. We will **complete and reopen the newly refurbished Dolfeurig Centre**, strengthening local provision of day services and community opportunities
5. We will continue to **reduce the backlog and speed up DoLS assessment timescales**, improving efficiency and ensuring that individuals receive timely assessments.

The list of strategic priorities in the Council Plan is set out here: [A Caring Gwynedd](#)



FURTHER INFORMATION

AUDITS AND REVIEWS

The close relationship between Cyngor Gwynedd and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Estyn and Audit Wales continued throughout 2025/26. An annual workshop was held as usual with representatives of the main audit organisations, continuously strengthening the approach to reviewing and assessing services.

During the year, there have been several important inspections and reviews across children's services. As already noted in the Annual Report, the Our Bravery Brought Justice Child Practice Review was published in autumn 2025, highlighting several weaknesses in practice. Significant work continues to respond to the recommendations, with progress being monitored through the **Response Plan Programme Board** and a quarterly report to the Cabinet by the Board Chair, Professor Sally Holland.



"I would like to acknowledge the commitment shown by Board members during what has been a complex and sensitive period of work. Attendance and participation continues at a high level. The Board recognises that strengthening safeguarding arrangements and embedding a child-centred, rights-based approach across a whole system takes time, sustained leadership, and requires careful scrutiny.

I am encouraged by much of the progress being made and the willingness to learn and adapt. The Programme is ambitious and will continue to demand senior staff time and other resources to be successful. The Board will continue to provide constructive support and robust oversight to Cabinet as this work progresses, with a continued focus on impact, transparency, and the lived experiences of children and young people."

Professor Sally Holland, Quarterly Report (10 March 2026)

In November 2025, a **joint review was carried out by Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn of the Council's safeguarding arrangements**. While the inspection identified many positive practices, four areas were highlighted for strengthening, including ensuring greater consistency in considering the voice of the child, developing quality assurance arrangements, strengthening safeguarding training, and improving some operational and commissioning arrangements. Work is already underway to respond to these findings, including the development of a Voice of the Child Strategy and the implementation of a new Quality Assurance Framework. The Response to Recommendations can be viewed in the Governance and Audit Committee papers from February 2026: **Item 11**.

The Adoption, Derwen and Fostering Services were also inspected by CIW during the year, with generally positive results. The Derwen Service report was particularly positive, recognising the high standard of the service and the results achieved. Work continues to implement the relevant recommendations to further strengthen the services.

There have been no external audits of Adults Services during 2025/26. However, the department continues to implement the recommendations of previous audits, with regular monitoring arrangements in place to review progress and ensure continued improvement.

COMPLAINTS

Although the Services consistently strive to provide care of the highest possible standard, there will inevitably be occasions when things go wrong. The statutory complaints procedure provides a formal route for individuals to raise concerns, enabling departments to learn lessons and avoid repeating mistakes.

During 2025/26, a total of 31 formal complaints were received at Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure, which is 3 more than the previous year. Five progressed to Stage 2 (compared to 3 complaints in 2024/25), and none were referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. This reflects a proactive approach to addressing concerns early and effectively, including close collaboration between Customer Care Officers, service teams, managers, and the Legal Service.

	Formal Complaint (Stage 1)	Stage 2 Complaint	Corporate Complaint	Ombudsman
Adults	15	2	4	0
Children	16	3	7	0

In the Children's Services Department, it is noted that a significant number of complaints are submitted while related cases are subject to court proceedings. In line with the relevant guidance, consideration of these complaints must be deferred until the legal process has been concluded, with individuals concerned being advised to raise their concerns through their legal representatives during proceedings.

No particular pattern was identified within Adult Services this year, with complaints being varied in nature and reflecting the unique circumstances of each case.

A more notable trend is the increase in Subject Access Requests (SARs), with approximately 20 more received than in the previous year. These requests often relate to individuals who have been in contact with Children's Services over long periods or who have been in care for a number of years. As a result, the process of retrieving, reviewing, and releasing information can be complex and resource intensive, creating additional pressure on the service while ensuring requests are handled fully and in line with legal requirements.

Learning from complaints is central to the complaints process, with each case reviewed by Departmental Management Teams to ensure appropriate and timely action is taken. In addition, in December, the Care Scrutiny Committee established a task and finish group to examine complaints arrangements in more detail (**Item 8**). Members were keen to improve their understanding of the nature of complaints received, the complaints process, the use of the Welsh language in complaints, and the support available to staff dealing with persistent complainants.

The full Annual Complaints Report, containing further detail, will be presented to the Care Scrutiny Committee in November 2026 and made available to the public via the Council's website, as part of our commitment to transparency and accountability. See previous complaints reports here: [**Annual Complaints Report**](#)

Further Information Links

This final section lists where to obtain further information about some of the topics referred to in this report.

- [Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28](#)
- [Cyngor Gwynedd Performance Report](#)
- [Compliments and Complaints procedure](#)
- [Response Plan Programme Board](#)
- [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](#)
- [Helpu'n Hun Online Assessment Tool](#)

