

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of the Strategy Programme is to set a direction for developments in the education and training field in Gwynedd over the next 15 years. The programme is being introduced within the context of policies and plans that are already in progress – both locally and nationally – to transform services that are provided for children, young people and their families.
- 1.2. The vision and aims of the Strategy Programme will serve as an important context when taking strategic decisions on the future of education and training within the County.
- 1.3. This type of Programme is required for several reasons:
 - to set a strategic and long-term direction for education and training for children and young people in the 3-19 age-group;
 - to draw together our aims and expectations for primary, secondary and post-16 education, as well as training for young people, in a single document – in a period of substantial change;
 - fully respond to the national strategies announced by the Assembly Government on fields such as education, schools, child poverty, children's well-being, training and skills;
 - support the process of drawing resources into the area to fund new developments in the education and training fields, so as to enable the education and training establishments to continue to ensure high attainment by our children and young people at every Key Stage.
- 1.4. It is important that any Strategy Programme relating to the future of children and young people is considered within the context of Gwynedd Children and Young People Scheme. This Scheme highlights the strategic aims and priorities of Gwynedd Children and Young People Partnership to promote the well-being of every child and young person within the County. During the preparation of the Scheme, detailed research was held to assess the needs of children and young people in the County (Children and Young People of Gwynedd Today) – and the Scheme is based on these priorities. Gwynedd Council, like the other principal establishments involved with children and young people's services in the County, has given a commitment to collaborate so as to ensure that the objectives of this Scheme are realized.
- 1.5. Our Charter of Rights is a key feature of the Children and Young People Scheme – namely a statement of the fundamental rights and responsibilities of every child and young person in Gwynedd.
- 1.6. The Strategy Programme "Towards 2025" has been planned within the context of the Charter of Rights, the priorities of Gwynedd Children and Young People Scheme and National Aim for schools as stipulated in the Schools Effectiveness Framework document.

2. STRATEGY PROGRAMME VISION AND AIMS "TOWARDS 2025"

- 2.1. Our vision is to:

"provide bilingual education and training of the highest possible quality" that will provide the children and young people of the County with experiences, skills and confidence and equip them to become bilingual, successful and well-rounded citizens.

- 2.2. Our vision for education and training in the 21st Century is based on six main aims:
- i. **Provide the best possible learning experiences** – for all learners within the County, ensuring an exciting and broad curriculum, as well as the extra-curricular curriculum, that motivates them to learn and comprehend, which leads to improved standards, making the best possible use of Information Technology;
 - ii. **Promote and support the physical health and emotional well-being of children and young people** – ensuring that the principal education and training establishments in the County are key players when planning and introducing integrated services for children, young people and their families;
 - iii. **Prepare young people for the workplace** – ensuring that they are equipped with the correct kind of skills for employment, especially within the local economy;
 - iv. **Create an excellent learning environment for children, young people and teachers within the County** – principally through improving facilities and buildings, and ensuring that schools are structured to respond to the change in contemporary teaching and learning process practices, especially when using Information Technology;
 - v. **Develop educational establishments of the correct type (primary and secondary) so that they provide a focal point for public and community-based services where appropriate** – and enrich experiences for children and young people as they become involved with establishments that provide services for the wider community.
 - vi. **Strengthen the Welsh Language** – as an educational and social medium – and to enable children and young people to gain access to bilingual education and training.

3. PRIORITIES WITHIN THE STRATEGY PROGRAMME "TOWARDS 2025"

3.1. Continue to Improve Educational and Training Standards

Our priority is to ensure close collaboration between Schools, the Colleges and all strategy partners so that the education and training system in Gwynedd enables every child and young person to achieve their maximum educational and learning potential”.

“Children and Young People of Gwynedd Today” indicate that education and training impacts all aspects of children and young people’s lives. Gaining good education that is of a high standard in modern and appropriate establishments provides children with the best possible start in life and enables them to fully achieve their potential. In addition, ensuring that young people gain full access to education and training (including education and vocational training) has a key role so as to enable them to develop, acquire and nurture the knowledge and skills that they require in order to develop into confident and well-rounded individuals.

Although the performance of pupils in Gwynedd remains amongst the highest in Wales, we are determined to further improve children and young people’s educational and learning attainment in several different fields, across the entire Key Stages. A greater emphasis will be placed on reducing the differences in performance within schools and between schools, and consequently, improve overall levels of attainment.

Priority	Outcomes	Indicators
Improve Educational and Training Standards	– Children and young people possess good literacy and numeracy skills;	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve children and young people’s educational attainment in specific fields; – Reduce diversity as regards learning outcomes within the County; – Provide the best opportunities for professional development of staff and be part of the learning community; – High quality of leadership at our schools; – Ensure that the curriculum is appropriate for every learner. 	
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3.2. A High Standard Learning Environment

Our priority will be to ensure that the “learning environment” for children, young people and teachers within the County – such as the condition of the school, the class, facilities for teachers, the play provision - will satisfy teaching and learning requirements in the 21stCentury, improving the resources so as to provide the best for our children and young people, and promote each individual’s attainment and achievement.

There is real concern about the condition and suitability of several schools in the County. The buildings require substantial investment so as to address health and safety matters and achieve appropriate standards. The Council Assets Management Plan estimates substantial accumulated costs of school maintenance in Gwynedd, and this is likely to substantially increase in future. There is also concern about the condition of temporary buildings in schools. The costs of up-grading and adapting the County’s school buildings to meet the new curriculum requirements and expected standards are even more substantial. We see a need to improve the condition and suitability of several schools within the County as a high priority. Over the next ten years, over £120 million will be available to finance Assets Management Plan requirements, and the Council has prioritized schools to ensure that they carry out improvements and meet the substantial existing accumulated costs.

Providing quality Information Technology facilities will form a key part of the “learning environment” in the 21stCentury. We will fully utilize the Information Technology opportunities that arise within the County, fully utilizing the developments in this field by improving learning and training standards. An emphasis is also placed on ensuring that the “learning environment” contains learning groups of the correct size within all educational and training establishments - so as to ensure that the children and young people of Gwynedd acquire the best possible experiences.

Priority	Outcomes	Indicators
Improve the Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Children and young people taught at educational establishments that can fully address contemporary teaching and learning needs and requirements, including Information Technology, Science, Physical Education; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nature and design of learning centres meet foundation phase and curriculum requirements across the key stages; – Children and young people are taught at educational establishments that provide services and facilities for the wider community; – Ensure that the best possible use is made of Information Technology within the education and training establishments for curriculum provision; – Children and young people are taught in appropriately sized learning groups. 	
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3.3. Make the Best Possible Use of Resources

Our priority is to ensure that children and young people obtain the maximum possible benefit from the funding available within the County for education and training, and that the resources in the field are fully utilized.

Given the current extremely challenging financial climate, it is critical that every effort is made to utilize resources as effectively as possible within the education and training system – human, technical, construction or financial resources – for the benefit of children and young people. A substantial proportion of the education budget is currently spent on maintaining a very expensive infrastructure, in both the primary and secondary sectors, and this is unsustainable in future. In addition, there is substantial expenditure on schools where there is a large percentage of empty places.

Action will need to be taken to rationalize the number of schools throughout the County, as well as identify opportunities to ensure overall improved effectiveness in the education and training system. For the 21st Century, there is a need to ensure that Gwynedd has a network of schools of the correct type at the appropriate locations across the County. Reducing the number of empty places and ensuring robust schools as regards size, would provide opportunities to develop inclusive and community-focused elements. Such a course of action is crucial if equal opportunities are to be promoted across the County and the impact of poverty in children and young people’s lives is to be reduced.

There is a need to consider the opportunities that arise so as to share buildings/resources in general, and developing the concept of **lifelong campuses** in certain areas of the County will require appropriate attention. We regard this concept as a means of safeguarding and developing education, with such provision leading to the merger of primary and secondary provision, enabling us to utilize staff specialization across the learning age-groups, as well as share resources and more efficient and effective use of those resources. Such establishments can be developed as locations for a wide range of public services, especially those services that affect the lives of children, young people and their families. Due to the nature and character of the County, this is regarded as a purposeful strategic direction.

Working in a partnership between schools and colleges will have a core role in achieving this priority, especially when implementing the new Area Curriculum and the requirements of the Learning and Skills Measure. This is seen as an opportunity to further develop the partnership between schools and colleges in the area, so as to make prudent use of resources and ensure that there is a wide choice of subjects available to young people within the County – both academically and vocationally.

Priority	Outcomes	Indicators
Make the best possible use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A reduction in empty places – as well as associated costs – within Gwynedd’s education and training establishments; – close collaboration between schools and colleges when providing 14-19 curriculum; – Low Carbon emissions within new education and training establishments in the County; – Divert funding for building maintenance across the County to front tier education. 	

3.4. Vulnerable Learner Groups

Our priority will be to ensure that vulnerable children and young people within the education and training system receive all possible means of support so that they have every opportunity to achieve their potential, and from within the educational establishments. This is a clear work requirement in the Authority's inclusion programme.

This means looked after children and young people, pupils with additional educational needs, excluded pupils, as well as some of our most gifted pupils.

“Children and Young People of Gwynedd Today” indicates that children and young people with additional needs and children and young people under special circumstances (such as children and young people in care, young offenders and young carers) do not always succeed in fulfilling and achieving their full learning potential within the education system. Indeed, an increase has occurred in Gwynedd over recent years in the number of children who have additional learning needs and/or a disability, and a further increase is envisaged over the next few years.

Priority	Outcomes	Indicators
Support vulnerable learner groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Vulnerable children and young people achieve educational success; – Low levels of exclusions from the educational establishments; – Children and young people in care achieve well; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children and Young People who receive free school dinner, achieve well; - Educational establishments an integral part of integrated services for children and young people to improve their well-being. 	
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3.5. Prepare the Future Workforce

Our priority is to ensure that the appropriate skills for employment and entrepreneurship will be promoted amongst children and young people, further developing the links between the education and training establishments, with the principal players in the local economy.

Developing this field is crucial in order to increase children, young people and teachers understanding of opportunities provided in the local economy. Placing an emphasis on this field will also assist when ensuring that the correct kind of learning pathways are in place so as to respond to those opportunities. There is an urgent need to ensure that children and young people are equipped with the correct kind of education, experiences and skills, when taking into account the growth sectors within the economy and labour market trends. Particular attention will be given to implementing 14-19 Learning Pathways requirements at every school, location of further education and work based learning placements, as well as strengthening employer's contribution to the curricular provision.

Priority	Outcomes	Indicators
Prepare the Future Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young people acquire and develop skills that they require to take advantage of opportunities that are provided in the local economy, especially the growth sectors; - Suitable provision of vocational courses available for children and young people within the educational and training establishments; - Young people receive unbiased career advice and guidance; - Welsh Baccalaureate at the three levels are promoted amongst children and young people; - Increase the number of young people remaining in post-16 education and training. 	

3.6. Access to Bilingual Education and Training

Our priority will be to ensure that children and young people will have smooth access to bilingual education and training in Gwynedd, especially in the early years.

The aim of Gwynedd Council Language Policy is to ensure that all pupils in the County are equally fluent as regards relevant age-related bilingualism so as to enable them to be well-rounded members of their bilingual community. The bias is in favour of Welsh in the early years so as to establish firm foundations for further development. We regard this as a high priority within the County. At the other key stages, schools are expected to purposefully plan so as to develop pupils grasp of Welsh as a subject and as a learning medium.

Informal opportunities also need to be promoted for children and young people to use Welsh as a social medium so as to enable them to develop confidence to use Welsh and foster positive attitudes towards the language beyond formal educational settings. Consequently, specific focus will need to be placed on trying to identify and present various opportunities to promote social use of Welsh within the school confines and beyond, prioritising development of creative and innovative measures so as to achieve this. The scale and importance of this challenge to our workforces in the establishments is recognized and it cannot be achieved without the will and determination to do so.

Priority	Outcomes	Indicators
Access to Bilingual Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthen and standardize use of Welsh through formal curriculum of education and training establishments; – Ensure language progression in the learning programmes of our education and training establishments; – Develop and implement plans to have a positive impact on the use of Welsh as a social language by children and young people as well as their attitude towards it. 	

3.7. Early Years

Our priority is to provide a comprehensive early years service in Gwynedd, identifying and responding to children's needs at a very early stage in their lives. It is intended to establish firm foundations at the Foundation Phase, especially in the literacy and numeracy field so as to enable every pupil to acquire the appropriate skills to develop into well-rounded individuals. The requirement and opportunities to nurture positive social attitudes, especially in children's dealings with each other, is a core aspect of this.

"Children and Young People of Gwynedd Today" indicates that the support and spur that children obtain during their early years has a fundamental impact on their lifelong ability and potential. Indeed, children who receive early years services and provisions of a high quality are more likely than children who have not received services and provisions of the same quality, to gain good results at the school and develop better social and emotional skills. We will also ensure that suitable arrangements are made to support parents so as to ensure that their children achieve the best possible results.

Priority	Outcomes	Indicators
Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="580 253 1007 421">– That children receive comprehensive and appropriate early years services, especially in the deprived communities; <li data-bbox="580 432 1007 663">– That there are appropriate arrangements in place in the educational establishments to collaborate with other agencies to identify and address children’s needs at an early stage. 	

4. PRINCIPLES

4.1. We will adhere to the following principles when implementing the “Towards 2025” programme:

- i. **Putting Children and Young People First** – we will ensure that the well-being, rights and needs of children and young people receive priority when planning, commissioning and providing services for them, so as to ensure that everybody has an opportunity to fulfil their maximum potential;
- ii. **Promote and Strengthen Collaboration** – we will work in partnership with schools, colleges and the other strategic agencies in an open and frank manner, aiming, whenever possible, to jointly plan and integrate services;
- iii. **Promote Participation and Knowledge** – we will ensure that children and young people’s participation will be central to educational developments, providing meaningful opportunities for children and young people to voice their opinions and be heard;
- iv. **Safeguarding Children and Young People** – we will ensure that children and young people’s safety is central in the planning, commissioning process and providing services for them;
- v. **Promote Sustainable Development** - we will develop schemes and commission services in a manner that promotes sustainable development principles, and which makes a positive contribution towards the aim of creating a more sustainable Gwynedd and world;
- vi. **Promote the Welsh Language and Bilingual Communities** - we will contribute towards the wider efforts to safeguard and promote the Welsh Language and support bilingual communities through increasing the available opportunities for children and young people to use the Welsh Language and try and ensure that there are bilingual services available to them;
- vii. **Addressing Child Poverty** – we will commission services and develop plans that effectively address poverty amongst children, young people and their families.

5. TO SUM UP

- 5.1. This Strategic Programme provides a clear framework when deciding on developments in the education and training fields in Gwynedd. In a word, the aims and priorities of this Programme will provide the crucial context for our primary, secondary and post-16 education and training strategies within the County.
- 5.2. Robust management arrangements will be established so as to ensure that all aspects of the Programme are inclusively and effectively implemented, adhering to the above-mentioned principles. The various services will also provide annual reports on the indicators referred to.
- 5.3. The Programme will be in place for a fifteen year period, thus reflecting our desire to ensure a long-term commitment to this particular field. Of course, many changes may occur during such a period, and consequently, the Programme's aims and priorities will be regularly reviewed. It is envisaged that the initial review will be held within three years of the Programme receiving Gwynedd Council's approval.

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