

Responses to the questions to the Services Scrutiny Committee 3.10.13 Re: Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Strategy Review.

1. The Strategy Plan sets as an objective to “improve experiences for children and young people who have additional learning needs”. What are the strengths of the current arrangements and what evidence is there of shortcomings in that system that could make a case for changing the provision. (It may be of benefit to provide a short description of the nature of the current provision so that Members are clear about its remit)

In consultation with parents, a desire for change was expressed so as to improve communication, information sharing between families and multi-agency services, advanced planning and jointly hold multi-agency reviews, ensuring full collaboration. The service currently relies on the schools to appoint assistants to provide support for pupils who have specific difficulties and often, this workforce requires up-skilling so as to have a more direct impact on the achievements of children and young people who have educational needs.

Undoubtedly, the current services contains very positive elements in terms of centralized teams work and the number of ALN tribunals held in Gwynedd is historically low. But statistics indicate that several difficulties are identified too late during a child’s education and opportunities to identify and take actions to remedy conditions at an earlier stage are missed. Historically, little action has been taken to target difficulties such as behavioural, emotional and social conditions, language difficulties and moderate learning difficulties at the pre-school stage and there is a need to ensure that the early years and primary sector workforce are up-skilled to identify conditions at an earlier stage.

There is an obvious link between deprivation and instances of ALN difficulties. We are aware that conditions such as language difficulty, moderate learning difficulties and social conditions are aspects that not only require an educational response but community collaboration and a family response. The current service and provision within the Council do not facilitate this kind of provision for the well-rounded child and the family.

As part of the Council’s efficiency savings scheme, a target saving of £400k from the ALN service budget has been set. Ensuring value for money is important in the current challenging financial climate.

2. What is the cost of the current provision in comparison with corresponding counties?

Summary of the data:

Family (9 Councils)

Entire SEN Budget for 2013-14

In its entirety, 4th highest in terms of expenditure in comparison with the family.

Capitation Expenditure – SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 4th,

Capitation expenditure - total number of pupils, Gwynedd 3rd.

Gwynedd expenditure £1,100k above the median.

Primary Budget 2013-14

Gwynedd Expenditure 3rd highest in expenditure compared to the family.
Per capita expenditure - SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 3rd. Gwynedd Expenditure £1,647k above the median.

Secondary Budget 2013-14

Gwynedd Expenditure 4th highest in expenditure compared to the family.
Per capita expenditure – SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 2nd.
Gwynedd Expenditure £208k above the median.

Special Budget 2013-14

Gwynedd Expenditure 5th highest as regards expenditure compared to the family.
Per capita expenditure - SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 5th.
Gwynedd expenditure is the median.

“Non-schools” Budget 2013-14

Gwynedd Expenditure 7th highest compared to the family.
Per capita expenditure - SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 8th.
Gwynedd expenditure £86k above the median.

All Councils

Entire SEN Budget 2013-14

Whole of Gwynedd 13th highest in terms of expenditure of all councils in Wales.
Per capita expenditure – SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 9th
Per capita expenditure – all pupils, Gwynedd 9th
Gwynedd expenditure £632k above the median.

Primary Budget 2013-14

Gwynedd Expenditure 7th highest in expenditure amongst all councils in Wales.
Per capita expenditure – SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 3rd.
Gwynedd expenditure £1,612k above the median.

Secondary Budget 2013-14

Gwynedd Expenditure 11th highest in expenditure amongst all councils in Wales.
Per capita expenditure - SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 9th.
Gwynedd expenditure £104k above the median.

Special Budget 2013-14

Gwynedd Expenditure 15th highest in expenditure amongst all councils in Wales.
Per capita expenditure – SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 12th.
Gwynedd Expenditure £880k below the median.

“Non-schools” Budget 2013-14

Gwynedd Expenditure 18th highest in expenditure amongst all councils in Wales.
Per capita expenditure – SEN pupils (statemented and non-statemented), Gwynedd 17th.
Gwynedd Expenditure £239k below the median.

3. What consultations have been held with users of the provision and their representatives/guardians regarding the need to change and the kind of options that are available to the Council? Has the consultation been a success in terms of the number of participants and the impact of the received contributions as the options were developed?

Two consultations were held with all the stakeholders. SNAP Wales were commissioned to hold independent consultation meetings with parents. The consultation remit was to:

- Find out parents views on the findings of Part 1 of the review and the viewpoint of the current system
- Find out views about the 4 recommended outlined options for change.

Face to face interviews were held, some telephone interviews, a series of focus groups and an e-mail message was sent to the parents of those children whose cases are open, to SNAP Cymru, inviting them to contact to arrange an interview. During each discussion, a detailed questionnaire containing specific questions, was completed. Parents also had an opportunity to submit any other comments. 103 parents were reached, approximately 9.5% of the ALN population.

Part 1 Findings.

- Complexity of the system and the need for simplification.
- Provide an equal opportunity for children and young people as regards quality of provision and access to specialism.
- Collaboration between Agencies.
- Make the child the focal-point.
- The provision of information, support and reconciliation.
- Effective transfer between Key Stages.
- Effective use of resources to improve achievement
- Identify difficulties at an early stage and intervene to deal with them.

With regards to every field, at least 83% of the sample are of the opinion that improvement is required. A very high percentage of them are of the view that improvement is required in equal opportunity (95.2%), the provision of information and support (96.4%) and early intervention (98.2%).

With regard to the consultation and Part 2 of the Strategy Review, the four outlined options for change were presented and parents comments were as follows:

- It is evident that a substantial proportion of parents (88.5%) were of the opinion that maintaining the status quo is not an option.
- It is also evident that a large majority (98.1%) oppose the establishment of an arms length company.
- There is strong support for the elements recommended in Options 2 and 3 (88.7%-99%).

Although the views of individual parents, or a comparatively small number of parents was obtained, a child and his/her family lie behind each of them and they express their actual experiences of the system. This information supports the initial work done with parents during Part 1 of the reviews and findings of the structured questioning and the following matters are deemed key matters to especially jointly focus upon and Part 1 findings.

- Improve overall communication with parents.
- Avoid placing parents in a situation where they have to fight for what they believe is their child's right.

- Ensure that this filed is high on the list of the statutory Agencies strategic priorities and that there is adequate funding.
- Ensure a holistic response to all families requirements.

100% of all the stakeholders contacted welcomed the role of the individual as a direct contact person with families to ensure:

- Direct contact with parents to improve inter-agency communication.
- Full implementation to hold multi-agency reviews and achieve the results.

The consultation process with professional stakeholders in education :

Consultations were held with 98 primary school headteachers, 9 secondary school co-ordinators, 95 teachers and 125 ALN assistants.

The Strategy Review's main aims were focussed upon and the main drivers highlighted as follows:

- Provide a quality service and value for money and challenge the current service
- Identify savings
- Respond to national and local policies
- Respond to the principles agreed with the stakeholders during Part 1 namely :
 1. Promote independence
 2. Evaluate results
 3. Ensure consistency
 4. Promote equal opportunities

The outlined options were presented and the opportunity to hold the discussion at a catchment-area level was welcomed. The importance and appreciation of the full consultation with all schools in the County was noted – at a catchment-area level, school sizes and schools requirements.

The headteachers, the teachers, the co-ordinators and assistants were unanimous that the third outlined options is the preferred option that addresses all the proposed requirements and on which multi-agency joint-planning focusses on the individual. It was strongly noted that the option requires adjustments for implementation on four levels, namely:

- Secondary schools
- Large primary schools
- Smaller primary schools
- Small primary schools

Concern was expressed about the lack of staff specializations to respond to medical conditions that are increasingly apparent in individuals who attend mainstream schools. The need was noted to prepare a suitable high level training programme to up-skill support staff in future.

Recently (September 16th 2013), a workshop of multi-agency stakeholders was held. The aim of the workshop was to confirm the requirement to transform the services for vulnerable children in Gwynedd and receive multi-agency support for that principle.

Proposals were presented to improve the services and discuss :

- The main challenges that could prevent this.
- The opportuniteis that may assist to ensure the changes.

A consensus was reached on three main principles with the aim of ensuring that further work was done to develop aims for:

- Integrated joint-planning for individuals
- Joint evidence based intervention.
- Develop a contact person's role for families.

It is intended to establish individual project boards (task and finish groups) to focus on the above priorities. This provides opportunities to scrutinize modelling of future integrated services.

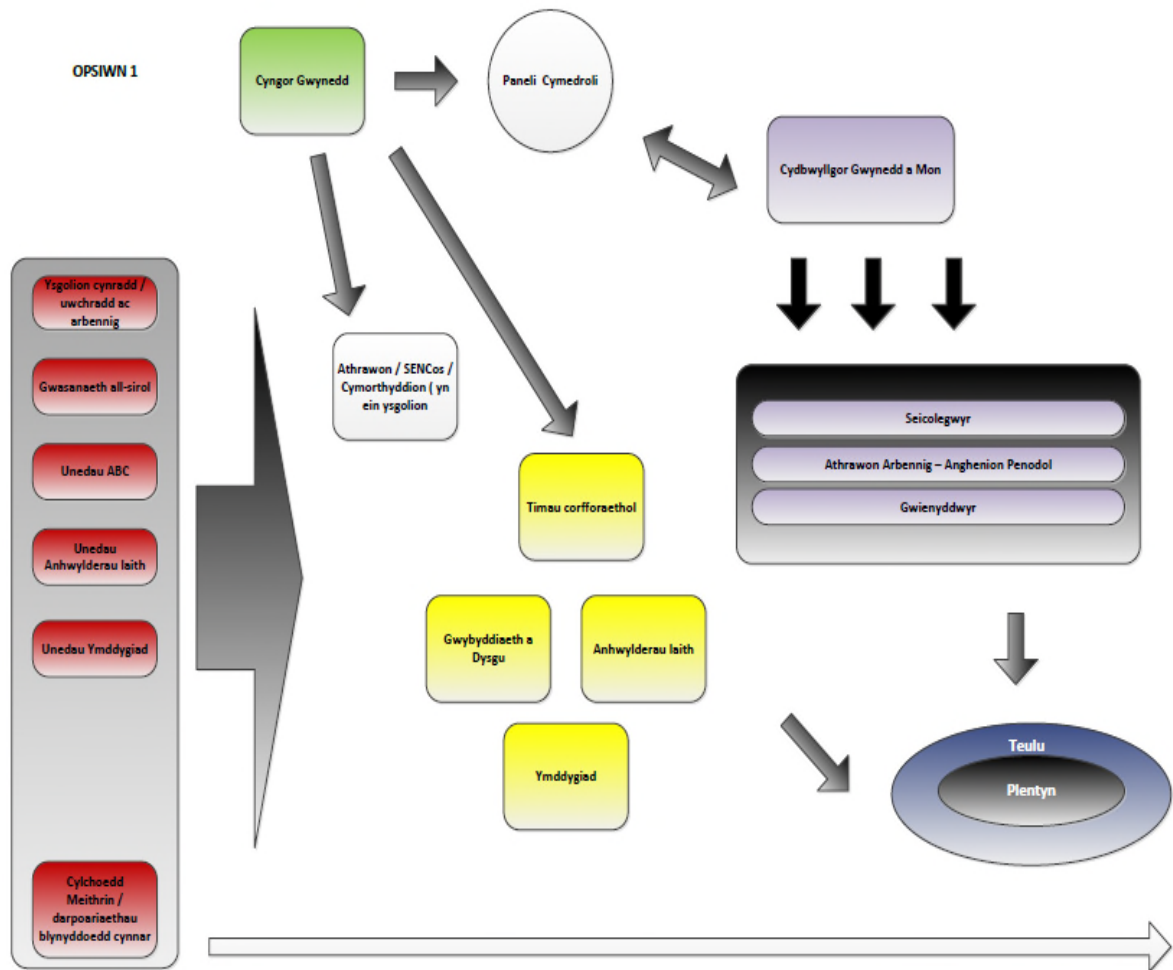
4. What are the available options for the Council in changing future provision and what will be the implications of those options? When will the Cabinet Member decide on the preferred model?

The type of options discussed for response to future local and national requirements are outlined below.

(A briefing session arranged for Cabinet Members 8 October 2013, a presentation on the Vision to transform services for vulnerable children in Gwynedd, and on the "End to End" project and this Review. It is intended to present a joint report with the two different projects as 2 Appendices to the Formal Cabinet either in November/December.)

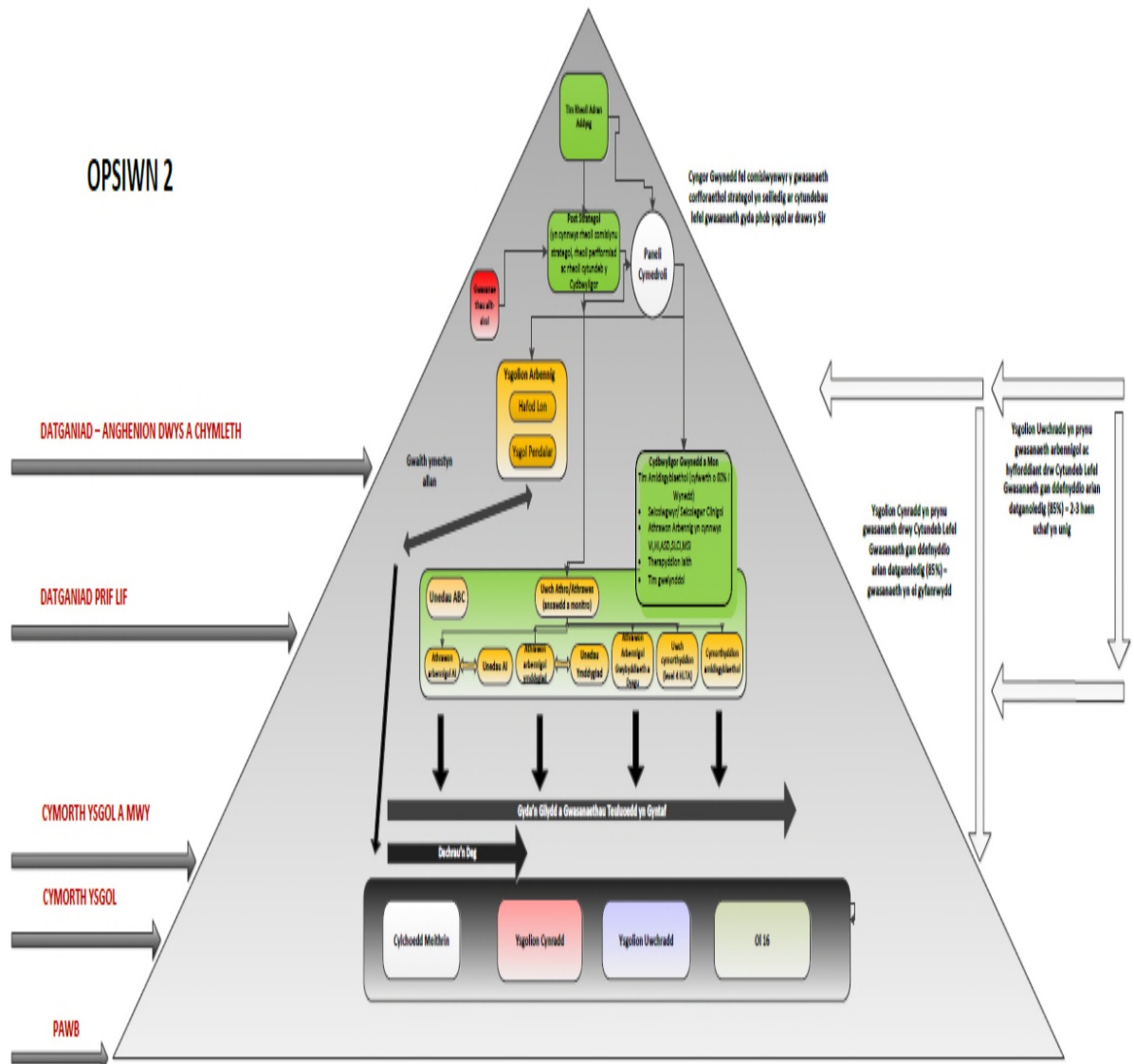
Option 1 – No Change

Implementing Option 1 would lead to failure to implement the proposed statutory requirements and failure to meet the aims and objectives identified so as to provide the best opportunities and experiences for the children and young people of Gwynedd.



Option 2 – Improve Service Elements

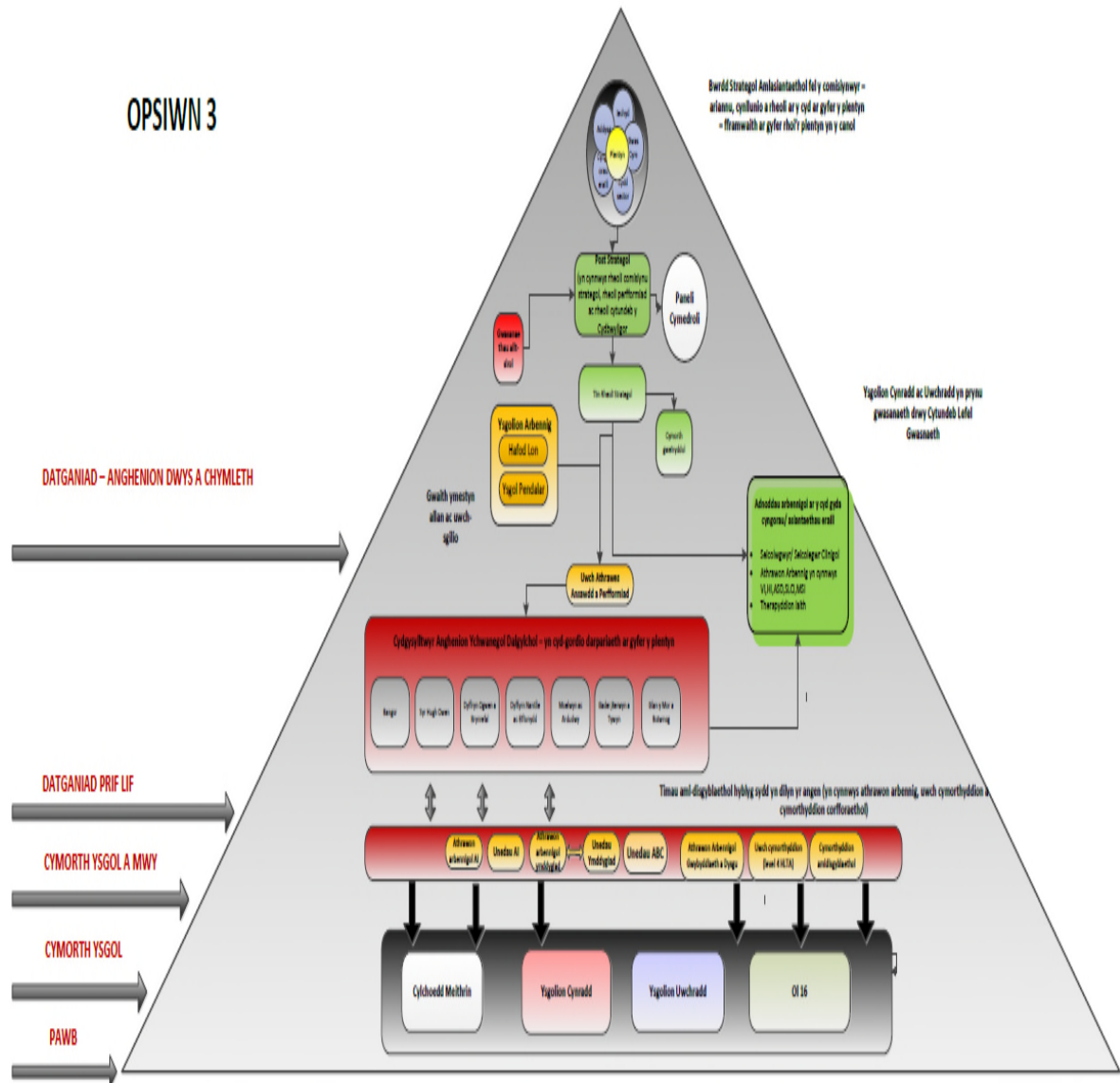
This would involve up-skilling and re-vamp of the the front line team of teaching assistants, strengthen and reinforce method of commissioning between the LEA and the SEN Joint-Committee and establish centralized specialist teams. The accountability for teams would be independent of individual schools but the school would have a prominent role when preparing the framework and collaborate to ensure the most appropriate solutions.



Option 3 – Substantial Change

This option provides a service that focuses on a child/young person with multi-agency support who will ensure smooth provision through key transformations in a child/young person's life including the pre-school – school, primary school – secondary school periods, - post 16 (proposed up to 25 years).

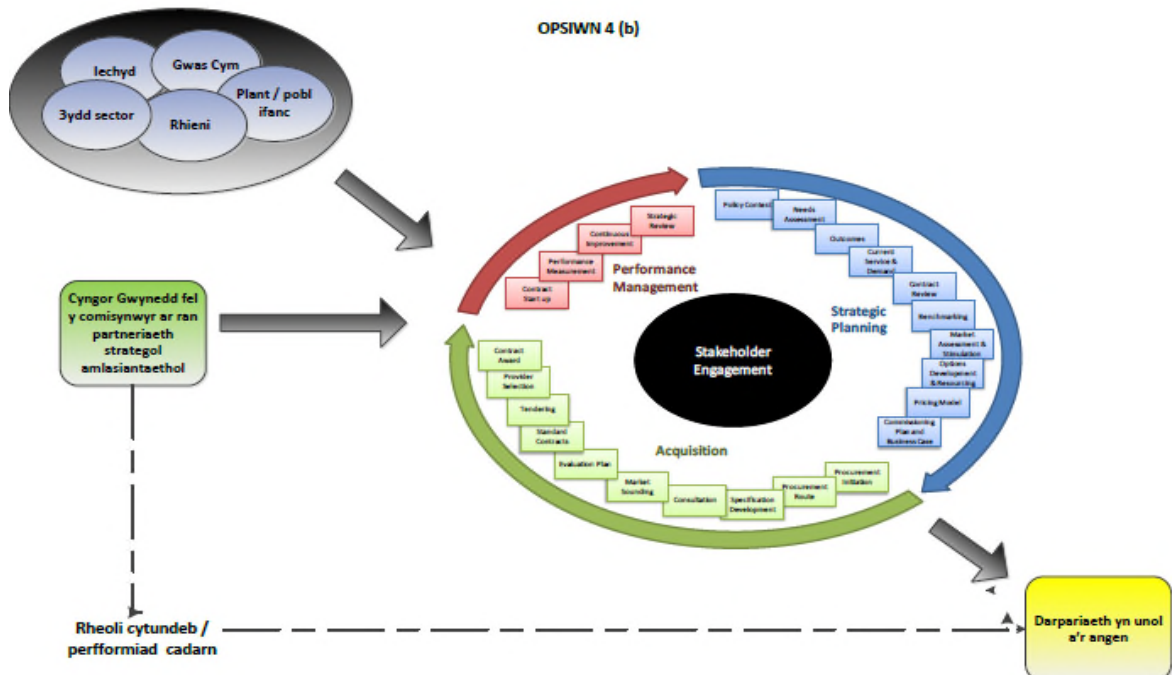
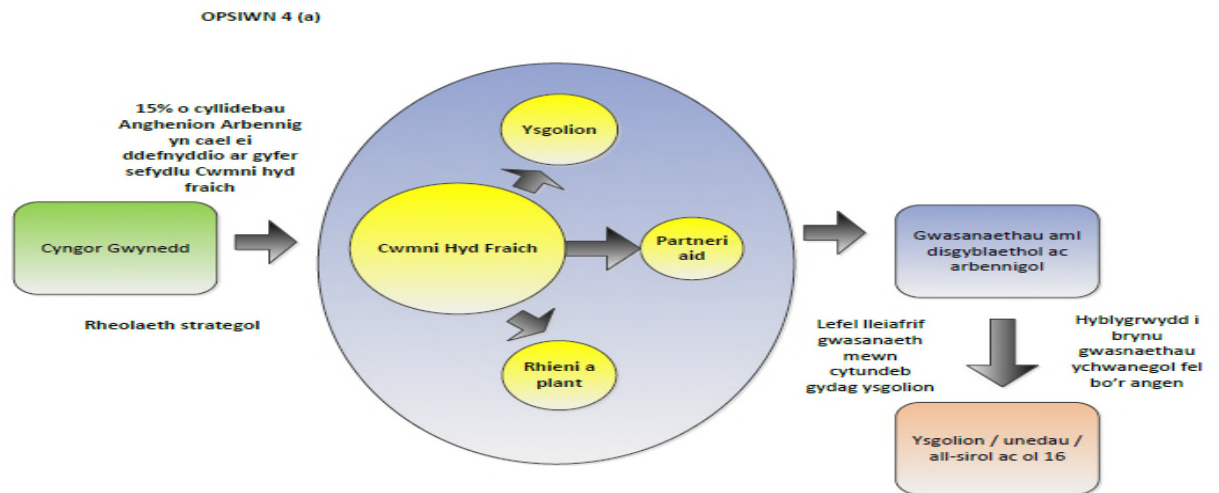
Through implementing this option, Gwynedd LEA will be pro-active in preparing for future AN Legislation statutory implications and respond to stakeholders aspirations to ensure that the whole child and family are focussed upon.



Option 4 – Radical Change

The stakeholders ideas regarding this option included:

- centralizing the service.
- commissioning the private sector to provide parts of the service.
- specific schools to provide support (linked to condition such as autism/communication etc) with flexible outreach teams.
- establish a warranted arms' length company.



5. What will be the largest obstacle to a change in the system and what arrangements will the Cabinet member have in place to address those obstacles?

The Strategy Review Project Board has assessed the obstacles throughout the outlined options development phase. Several risks are apparent and they continue to exist throughout stages of identifying and deciding on the way forward.

Option 2/3.

The main risk is to do with the nature of the scope of the change including the need to ensure additional resources and to promote change in culture with regard to outcomes, service performance and transform the workforce.

The level of change between the nature of the current workforce and the new proposed workforce identifies a lack of balance between generic provision and specialist provision - but presenting the change will require securing stakeholders vision and collaboration.

Once, everybody understands the changes, there will be a need to secure the support of the workforce, the unions and the politicians.

Another obvious risk is the need to be able to identify and recruit specialists. The Council will need to increase the practice of collaboration with establishments and further education colleges to provide opportunities to identify individuals competent with handling recruitment matters.

Consideration must be given to that level and quality of provision may weaken during the transition phase. This is not an uncommon occurrence during a transition phase but the Council will be required to closely monitor the situation.

6. As the Strategy Plan mentions agreeing on a new provision model during 2013/14, what is the more detailed time-table for agreeing upon the model and then implementing it?

Project Progress thus far

An options report has been completed

A programme to contact Assistants and Teachers has been held and the findings have been shared with all the stakeholders including Social Services and Health Services.

The link programme with the 'End To End' Project has been established.

A briefing session for Cabinet Members will be held on 8th October.

A report will be presented to the Cabinet in November/December 2013.

The aim is to ensure that (certain) educational elements of the Additional Learning Needs Strategy Review and Inclusion are available by September 2014.

The aim is to fulfil multi-agency integrated services aims by September 2015.

7. What is the vision for the service? What will represent success and how will the Cabinet Member evaluate the impact of the change to the provision and notice the difference that the change in provision makes?

The Vision

Provide full services for the vulnerable children and young people in Gwynedd and their families.

Be involved with integrated personal schemes.

Ensure quality service and provisions that provide value for money.

Respond to agreed principles.

Ensure that there is a link person to work with families of vulnerable children and young people.

Measure impact.

Appropriate effective support and provision in place for vulnerable individuals through specialized intervention and a reduction in provision periods.

Parents fully understand the nature of schools responsibilities and roles in the support provision procedure.

A reduction in ALN statements.

Rationalize expenditure on individuals who are educated within mainstream schools across the sectors.