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Gwasanaeth Democraidd
Democratic Service
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Cyfarfod / Meeting

PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Dyddiad ac Amser / Date and Time

10.00 a.m. DYDD IAU, 28 TACHWEDD 2013

10.00 a.m. THURSDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2013

Lleoliad / Location

SIAMBR HYWEL DDA

SWYDDFEYDD Y CYNGOR

CAERNARFON

*** NODWCH Y LLEOLIAD, O.G.Y.DD. / PLEASE NOTE THE VENUE ***

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Dosbarthwyd: 20.11.13

**PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

AELODAETH / MEMBERSHIP (18)

Plaid Cymru (9)

Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors

Huw Edwards	Alan Jones Evans
Chris Hughes	Elin W. Jones
Linda Ann Wyn Jones	Liz Saville Roberts
Dyfrig Siencyn	Ann Williams
Hefin Williams	

Annibynnol / Independent (4)

Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors

Eryl Jones-Williams	Beth Lawton
Dewi Owen	Eirwyn Williams

Llais Gwynedd (4)

Alwyn Gruffydd	Llywarch Bowen Jones
Peter Read	Dilwyn Lloyd

Llafur / Labour (1)

Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Sion Wyn Jones

Aelodau Ex-officio / Ex-officio Members

Cadeirydd ac Is-Gadeirydd y Cyngor / Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council – Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors Huw Edwards a / and Dewi Owen

AELODAU CYFETHLEDIG / CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Hefo pleidlais ar faterion addysg yn unig /
With a vote on education matters only

Y Parchedig / Reverend Robert Townsend
Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru / The Church in Wales

Mrs Rita Price
Yr Eglwys Gatholig / The Catholic Church

Mr Dylan Davies
Cynrychiolydd Rhieni Llywodraethwyr Meirionnydd /
Representative for Meirionnydd Parent Governors

(Disgwyl am enwebiad / Awaiting Nomination)
Cynrychiolydd Rhieni Llywodraethwyr Arfon /
Representative for Arfon Parent Governors

Ms Rhian Roberts
Cynrychiolydd Rhieni Llywodraethwyr Dwyfor /
Representative for Dwyfor Parent Governors

A G E N D A

1. **APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies for absence.

2. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

3. **URGENT BUSINESS**

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

4. **MINUTES**

The Chairman shall propose that the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on the 3 October 2013, be signed as a true copy.

(Copy enclosed – white paper)

5. **CORPORATE PARENTING**

Cabinet Member: Cllr. Sian Gwenllian

10.00 am –
11.00 am

To consider the Education Cabinet Member's report on the above.

(Copy enclosed – yellow paper)

6. **LEISURE CENTRES SUFFICIENCY REVIEW**

Cabinet Member: Cllr. Paul Thomas

11.00 am –
12.00

To consider a report by the Cabinet Member to include a summary of the Consultants report.

(Copy enclosed – blue paper)

7. **IMPLEMENTATION AND GRANT EXPENDITURE ON ADAPTATIONS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE**

Cabinet Member: Cllr. John Wyn Williams

12.00 –
1.00 pm

To consider the Care Cabinet Member's report on the above.

(Copy enclosed – white paper)

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

03.10.13

Present: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn – Chairman
Councillor Peter Read - Vice-chairman

Councillors: Alan Jones Evans, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, Liz Saville Roberts, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, and Hefin Williams.

Others invited: Cllr. Siân Gwenllian (Cabinet Member for Education), Cllr. R H Wyn Williams (Cabinet Member for Care)

Co-opted Members with

a vote on education matters: Mrs Rita Price (Catholic Church), Rev. Canon Robert Townsend (Church in Wales)

Also Present: Marian Parry Hughes (Senior Manager Children's Services), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Commissioning Service) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer), Dewi R Jones (Head of Education), Orina Pritchard (Senior Manager Transitional Service).

Observer: Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Customer Care), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director).

Apologies: Councillors Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Mr Dylan Davies (Meirionnydd Parent Governors Representative), Mrs Rhian Roberts (Dwyfor Parent Governors Representative) and Siôn Amlyn (Teachers Union).

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) The Chair welcomed Mrs Rita Price to the meeting as a representative of the Catholic Church on this Committee.

(b) Best wishes for a full and speedy recovery were extended to Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 20 June 2013, as a true record.

4. QUALITY OF EDUCATION - SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

The report of the Scrutiny Investigation on the Quality of Education was submitted which had been commissioned by the Education Cabinet Member to look at the following issues:

- Why did polarisation occur in the KS4 performance of schools
- Achievement standards in Mathematics and the impact of this on the TL2+ indicator
- Why were the quality standards and KS3 provision generally robust across all the authority's schools
- Foster a fuller understanding of the performance of pupils receiving FSM and the degree to which the achievement of this group of learners impacts on KS4 performance
- The impact of leadership on the performance of schools and the way leadership skills are nurtured and developed.

(a) The Chair of the Investigation, Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts, set the context by firstly thanking her fellow members and Reverend Robert Townsend together with the officers for their praiseworthy work. It was noted that the main findings of the investigation had expanded beyond the above brief. It was stressed that it was possible for Members to contribute to the recommendations prior to submitting the final report to the Cabinet Member for Education for action.

The order of the Investigation was explained and it was noted that interviews had been conducted with:

- Heads of six specific schools in the County
- Parents/governors of the six schools
- Pupils

The six schools were chosen on the basis of good performance, underperformance and where significant change had occurred in performance.

In addition, presentations were received by external experts that were extremely interesting, inspiring and memorable. In terms of the impression received by the investigation stemming from the interviews and the presentations, it was noted how important it was to inspire, motivate and calling to account and this played a key part in the quality of leadership and good results.

Several members of the Scrutiny Investigation felt that there had been a tendency for Gwynedd in the past to be introverted and that it was important to look at good practice outside the County.

Members were guided through the recommendations of the Investigation based on the following findings:

- (a) Leadership in Schools
- (b) Mathematics attainment standards
- (c) Performance and Data
- (d) Raise and Convey Expectations
- (e) Polarization in terms of Quality
- (f) The Authority's Role
- (g) The Role of Governors
- (h) Contact with Pupils

(b) Members were given an opportunity to scrutinise the conclusions and the following points were highlighted:

- (i) It was questioned if the NPQH qualification for Heads prepared individuals for the range of responsibilities attached to the work of a Head.

In response to the above, the Head of Education explained that 100 persons were accepted to undertake the qualification annually and this included a very detailed programme that required a series of experiences.

- (ii) That there was a need to strengthen elements in primary schools such as tracking progress in Mathematics. Attention was drawn to one of the experts who gave a presentation to the Investigation who stated two examples of excellence in raising standards in Mathematics within the County and noted further that there were successful examples of good practice in poor areas outside the County to raise the standards of Mathematics.
- (iii) Concern that some teachers had to teach a subject where they had no qualification and this caused concern especially for small schools.
- (iv) That there was a danger to focus and misuse data for one purpose that would lead to losing the human element.
- (v) Important to focus on the future rather than look back but to use what had been learnt in the past to build upon for continual improvement.
- (vi) Raise ambition to increase the performance target to 100% rather than be satisfied with 65%.
- (vii) In the context of data and performance, it was asked to what extent consideration could be given to factors such as learning Welsh and English as an additional language especially considering the complexities caused to those pupils who do not speak Welsh or English at home. It was felt that worthy recognition should be given to this factor for the benefit of the progress of the pupil.
- (viii) There should be an attempt to inspire parents regarding their children's education
- (ix) Several frustrations were seen with the role of the governors, specifically too much responsibility was given to them.
- (x) The role of the authority's governors should be expanded as a result of receiving a complaint from one governing body that Council Members were not members of the governing body and they saw this as an important contact point between the school and the Community.
- (xi) Governors should be more challenging with Head teachers and it was seen that some governing bodies would welcome a meeting without the Head and the staff being present.
- (xii) The importance that governors learn about the culture of being a critical friend and being more challenging whilst accepting that support should also be offered.
- (xiii) That current training addressed the requirements of governors with what was expected from them and meetings to share experiences amongst each other and with governors from other counties were appreciated.
- (xiv) Governors should receive more support / training on proficiency action
- (xv) That the observations received from the pupils were valuable and it was necessary to give specific attention to them.

(c) The Education Cabinet member appreciated the thorough work undertaken by the Scrutiny Investigation and the fact that they had extended their work beyond the brief. The recommendations made by the Scrutiny Investigation would interweave with the Raising Standards Project which was one of the Council's main priorities. In addition,

reference was made to the Robert Hill Report and it was noted that it was anticipated that there would be a change in the world of education stemming from the contents of the report. The Cabinet Member for Education confirmed that she would respond formally to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Investigation.

(ch) The Senior Manager Commissioning Work explained that the Quality of Education Scrutiny Investigation would meet once again to draft a final report to include the observations recorded above and submit this to the Cabinet Member for a formal response. In response to a query by a Member regarding the establishment of a standing Scrutiny Investigation to monitor progress in this field, the Senior Manager Commissioning Service explained that the investigations, as a matter of procedure, were 'task and finish' working groups, however, this could be discussed further at the next preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee

Resolved: (a) That the Education Quality Scrutiny Committee hold another meeting to draft a final report bearing in mind the comments made above, to be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Education.

(b) To request the Cabinet Member for Education to respond formally to the recommendations of the Investigation in the form of an action plan/work programme and submit a report to this Scrutiny Committee within approximately 6 months noting the progress in the implementation of the recommendations.

(c) Discuss how to monitor progress in the above field at the next preparatory meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2013.

5. POST-INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

The Post-Inspection Action Plan for the Education Service was submitted in response to the Estyn report on the quality of local education authority services for children and young people.

(a) The Cabinet Member for Education reminded members that ESTYN had visited the Education Service in March this year and had adjudged that the authority was in the sufficient category in terms of current performance with a forecast for improvement. Consequently, it was a requirement for the Education Service to draft a post-inspection action plan to respond to the ESTYN recommendations. It was noted that a great deal of the work had been undertaken over the summer and the action plan had by now been adopted by the Cabinet and submitted to ESTYN on 20 September 2013. Reference was made to the six recommendations by ESTYN namely:

1. Improve protection through ensuring that the Council's procedures and policies are clearly understood by all LEA employees and are regularly up-dated and disseminated.
2. Raise standards at key stage 4 through targeting poorly under-performing departments at secondary schools more robustly.
3. Monitor and challenge every school and use all the available powers at the LEA's disposal to improve leadership and management at underperforming schools.
4. Continue to develop and implement current LEA strategies to improve attendance at secondary schools
5. Improve quality of self-evaluation, and how improvement plans and performance management procedures are implemented in the Education Department.

6. Continue to implement plans to reduce number of empty places.

(b) Members were given an opportunity to give observations and the following points were highlighted:

(i) Concern regarding the challenging percentages in recommendation 6 to reduce the number of empty places bearing in mind that it was necessary to give consideration to an extensive part of Gwynedd within a period of two years.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Education explained that the Welsh Government placed great emphasis on getting rid of empty places and this Council had challenged its stance noting that the priority was to improve the quality of education. A target of 10% was given to each authority by the Welsh Government and this was challenged and a compromise was accepted that a rural area such as Gwynedd could never attain the target and within the outcomes of the Education Service there was a more realistic figure. The Cabinet had agreed on a priority plan that included the current re-organisation and the work that was on-going in the catchment areas of y Gader, y Berwyn and in Arfon. In addition, the Service undertook technical work regarding calculating the empty places in schools and by re-defining the space within schools a reduction was seen in the percentage of empty places.

(ii) That some of the outcomes were ambitious on the attainment of the school and it was asked if they were accessible.

In response, the Head of Education noted that it appeared from this year's results on TL2+ which would be published publicly in due course, that 4 out of the 5 schools where there was under performance in the Departments had made very good progress based on work that had been undertaken in Mathematics.

(iii) Whilst accepting the above comment, it was further noted that it had become evident through the Scrutiny Investigation that the results percentages did not reflect the actual situation in schools because of all the private lessons which occur outside schools. The situation should be analysed to see if the improvement in the schools corresponded to the figures for success.

(iv) It appeared that there was a shortcoming in the progress with written skills as a result of the modern technological age and that an eye should be kept on this.

In response, the Head of Education explained that since September this year the framework for literacy and numeracy should address the above concern, which was a statutory requirement for every organisation and received worthy attention in primary and secondary schools.

(v) It was asked if the performance this year was reflected in the national quartiles.

In response, the Head of Education noted that it appeared that the progress in Gwynedd on the TL2+ performance was nearly 58% this year compared with 55% last year however, it was too early to know how this would be reflected in the quartiles. It was stressed that the final information would be received later on in the year.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the Post-Inspection Action Plan.

6. PRESENTATION –CHILDREN ‘END TO END’ REVIEW

(a) A presentation was received for information by the Senior Children’s Services Manager on the above review when it was noted that the Council’s main priority was to ensure that Gwynedd’s children and young people are safe and protected when necessary. The second priority was also obviously to ensure that the Service is provided in such a way as to give value for money.

The review of the Children’s Services was commissioned since it appeared that the Service might be failing to offer value for money and in following best practice. Therefore, there was uncertainty as to whether the Service provided the best outcomes for service users. The scope of the review was agreed by giving full consideration to the following tiers by planning and recommending changes:

Tier 1 – Children (Universal Services)

Tier 2 – Vulnerable Children

Tier 3 – Children in Need (where failure to intervene would lead to a disadvantage to the family)

Tier 4 – Looked after Children or need protection (children on the register with complex and profound needs)

The main messages of the review in terms of value for money was that Gwynedd’s level of expenditure on Children’s Services was significantly higher than the ‘family’ of similar councils, and had been so for many years (£3.5m higher in 2012-13 and 2013-14 and the main drivers of the costs were:

- Residential care (£2.2m in 2012/13 for children with profound and complex disabilities outside the County) and foster care (£0.9m)
- Numbers of looked after children rather than the cost of care
- Lack of options.

As part of the review, and in terms of placements, an analysis was made of each case independent of the Service to see if the threshold was correct and the conclusion was that the determination was correct in each of the 22 cases. However, if other options had been available when the decision was made to place a child in out of county residential care it was assumed that only 7 children would need a long term out of county placement. This was due to the lack of specialist service available at the time such as an alternative provision to include specialist foster placements, specialist support by other agencies, short respite support for families, strong specialist support and also an increase in the numbers of foster parents who could cope with advanced care in accordance with the needs of the children.

It was noted that the national focus was on the following aspects:

- Early intervention when the child is young
- Quick response to problems when they arise
- Multi agency

Examples of best practice were seen across the United Kingdom and specifically in the Scottish model called ‘Streamlined Response’ which tried to reduce problems by moving responsibility from one agency to the next as needs increase i.e. multi agency Team based on local teams with the virtue of being able to intervene from the first evidence of problems until their solution.

Developed from the best practice research and the workshops that took place the following proposals presented themselves for further consideration:

- Proposal 1 - Access to services across the tiers of need (changes in allocation of grants had excluded children's access)
- Proposal 2 - One 'front door' (establish one multi agency door for all services where referrals are assessed jointly at the first step)
- Proposal 3 - Multi-agency team (experimenting with a small team to undertake Multi-agency work on the basis of the 'streamline response' team and piloted in a specific area initially to be evaluated before extending further)
- Proposal 4 - Edge of Care Team (research shown focus on intense intervention
In the first 6 weeks to get a child home succeeds better than leaving a child in care).
- Proposal 5 - Managing Care placements (associated to the above)
- Proposal 6 - Reducing bureaucracy (reduce the requirement on Social Workers in terms of recording in order to release time for them to spend with families in order to undertake valuable work)

To conclude, the Senior Children's Services Manager outlined the following as a vision for the future:

1. Intervention and suitable care, at the right time, in the right place and at the right cost.
2. Good and timely professional application of skills, and readiness to work on a multi-agency basis where appropriate.
3. In communities that evidence vitality, and where the well-being and potential of children is maximised.

(b) During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- (i) That there was national criticism on the out of county care provision for children because of the cost and the numbers and there was concern that the distance from the family could intensify the children's problems by alienating them from families.
- (ii) That over expenditure on out of county placements had been a problem in the past and should not the authority have established its own provision by now to overcome the problem outlined above.
- (iii) It was asked what were the action points following the review and if the Service had drafted an action plan.

(c) In response to the above comments, the Senior Children's Services Manager explained as follows:

- that the distance of out of county placements was a concern to the Service although they were fairly close in miles in the areas of Wrexham and Cheshire they were far in terms of culture and linguistic needs. However, the Service had a responsibility to promote contact between the children and families and everything was done within their capability to have access to a proportion of their education through the medium of Welsh.
- That there were pioneering schemes in the pipeline to establish a Centre of Excellence that would include the education of Hafod Lon together with respite care facilities for disabled children.

- In terms of vision, the Service had a plan for commissioning for Children's Service and the priority was to reduce the number of children in care in the next five year.
- The aim was to make savings every year through preventative work however it had to be understood that some children and young people required specialist care that was not available in Gwynedd.
- That the Service had identified the priorities namely:
 - Establish an Edge of Care Team
 - Reducing the bureaucracy requirements
 - Act in an multi-agency manner across Tiers 2,3 and 4 and maximise access to families such as parenting services etc.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the presentation.

7. ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS REVIEW

(a) A presentation was received as background information to the Cabinet Member for Education's report regarding the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Strategy Review.

The above review was commenced approximately 18 months ago and stemmed from inconsistencies in the provision that Gwynedd's children and young people receive across the authority. A Welsh Government Consultation Document published in 2012 stated the following and encouraged the authority to think much wider in order to ensure an effective partnership to provide effectively for children:

"Progress towards effective multi-agency partnerships to provide for these most vulnerable of children and young people has been weak in most areas of Wales".

The Government highlighted the following three important points:

- Poor communication and information sharing
- Under-developed planning and evaluation; and
- Multi-disciplinary assessments, which were often completed in isolation from one another.

Bearing the above in mind, the aim in Gwynedd was looked at:

- To ensure a complete service for children and young people and their families
- To interrelate and ensure integrated plans
- To ensure good quality services and value for money
- To respond fully to national and local policies
- To respond to agreed principles: to promote independence, measure quality, ensure consistency and the promotion of equal opportunities, up skill staff.

A company called CAPITA was commissioned to look at this field and the their findings from the current system were:

- Inconsistency
- Traditional and complicated
- The quality of performance tracking

- Collaboration
- Different patterns of practice
- Growth in specific needs
- Communication
- Creating dependency

In consultation with the stakeholders the main messages were:

- 88.5% were of the opinion that doing nothing was not an option
- 100% of the education professionals were of the view that the current system was not sustainable in the future
- Between 88.7% and 99% of parents were in favour of change, in order to improve elements of the service
- 99% of parents of individuals with more profound and complex difficulties/disabilities favoured moving to a service that concentrates on the child/young person and their families with fully integrated multi-agency support
- 100% of all stakeholders approached welcomed the role of an individual as a person to provide a direct link with families so as to ensure:
 - A direct link with parents to improve communication between agencies
 - Full implementation to conduct multi-agency reviews and realise outcomes

The elements to be addressed were listed as well as the background to the options discussed in response to future requirements namely:

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Option 1 | - | No change (this would lead to failure to implement the statutory requirements and failure to meet the identified aims and objectives) |
| Option 2 | - | Improve Service Elements (this would involve up-skilling staff and forming a front line team of teaching assistants to develop a career path and place them within the schools) |
| Option 3 | - | Substantial Change (this would lead to a service that focuses on a child/young person with multi-agency support i.e. health and social services) |
| Option 4 | - | Radical Change |

To conclude, it was noted that Option 2 was favoured with the intention of moving to Option 3 as phase 2. The need to keep Option 2 and 3 separate at the moment was emphasised due to the financial implication attached to Option 3.

(b) Members were given an opportunity to ask questions on the contents of the presentation and the report before them and the following points were highlighted:

- (i) concern regarding financing the options and that other services would suffer
- (ii) concern regarding the apparent risk of recruiting specialists in the field
- (iii) information was requested regarding the timescale for implementing the favoured options and how expenditure would be monitored and measuring the implementation plan?
- (iv) bearing in mind that teaching assistants were central to the implementation of Option 2 and by up-skilling them was it realistic to expect them to work on their current salaries?

- (v) by creating Catchment Area Teams of Assistants, it was asked how many fewer assistants would there be in schools and how would they cope with this?

In response to the above comments, the Senior Transitional Service Manager explained as follows:

- It was trusted that the options could be financed by using resources that already exist more effectively by considering the needs of the children and up-skill the assistants to be able to deal with a range of needs such as learning cognition, language disorder and behaviour more effectively
- That they would collaborate closely with Colleges of further education to ensure that specialist individuals received appropriate and relevant training
- In terms of the timescale, there were many milestones to be reached to achieve change however it was hoped that phase 1 of Option 2 would be implemented by September 2015.
- There was close cooperation with the Council's Human Resources Department and when the responsibilities were identified and determined that it would be necessary to evaluate the posts of the assistants
- It was difficult to currently note how many fewer assistants schools would have as parallel to this the Welsh Government had published a target for the devolvement of education funding to schools and perhaps service level agreements might have to be established between the authority and the schools for special needs provision. An assurance was given that discussion would be held with schools to this end and they were aware of the favoured Options.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the presentation.

8. CARE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

The Chairman of the Investigation, Councillor Peter Read, reported that one meeting of the Care Scrutiny Investigation had taken place and the brief had been agreed to scrutinise how good the service was for patients once they had been discharged from hospital. They would consult with partners in this field together with interviewing a sample of service users.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.50 pm

CHAIRMAN

NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	28:11:2013
TITLE OF ITEM	COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PARENT PANEL
CABINET MEMBER	COUNCILLOR SIAN GWENLLIAN

1.Introduction

1.1 It was decided at the Services Scrutiny Committee's preparation meeting on 21 October that there was a need to scrutinise the work of the "Council's Corporate Parenting" and a number of questions of interest to members were noted. Therefore, the intention of this report is to respond to each question in turn.

1.2 On 8 October, the Annual Report of the Corporate Parent Panel was submitted to the Cabinet. It is noted in the introduction to the Report that the Council has a statutory responsibility as a "corporate parent" for looked after children and that there is an expectation on each Council to behave as if it is a parent to these children. Although there is parental responsibility on every elected member and Council staff member (these responsibilities are described in the document "If it were my child..."), the Corporate Parent Panel has a specific role in relation to ensuring an overview of the welfare and interests of looked after children.

2. Number of children for whom the Council acts as a corporate parent and the arrangements for taking on this responsibility.

2.1 In the latest report of the Service Manager (Resources) to the Corporate Parent Panel, it was noted that care can be provided to a child or young person in many types of placements. Changes in the nature of placements or placements themselves do not reduce the Council's responsibility as a corporate parent. Those placements may include:-

- Foster placements
- Placements with extended family or friends (under fostering regulations)
- Residential placements
- Placements with a parent or parents under a Care Order
- Independent accommodation in the community (for young people over 16 years of age)

2.2 Every child or young person has a social worker who has a responsibility to keep in regular contact. It should be noted also that there is a responsibility towards young people who have left care and it is ensured that the Service makes every attempt to continue with the necessary support if the young person wishes for that to happen. In addition, looked after children cases were reviewed in accordance with a statute by Independent Review Officers. An initial review is undertaken within a month of the placement, a second review within three months and further reviews every six months throughout the care period. This has been a challenge for the service, but performance is now improving. Performance is reported upon regularly to the Corporate Parent Panel.

2.3 At the end of September 2013, 191 children and young people were in the Council's care and the Council was their corporate parent. This was a reduction of 12 children compared to the total at the end of March 2013. From this total, 152 (79%) were in foster care, 17 (9%) were in a residential placement and 13 (7%) were placed with parents. Seven children were in adoptive placements and four young persons lived independently with support.

2.4 During the period April – September 2013, 12 children came into care for the first time (which is substantially fewer than during the same period last year). The majority were young children, younger than one years of age. Over the same period, 25 children or young people left care – three were adopted, five returned to their parents, 10 young persons turned 18 and a Special Guardianship Order was made in four cases.

2.5 In the report of the Service Manager to the Panel, the following is also noted:

“...the children service has a placement strategy at work with the aim of increasing the choice of placements available for children. Responding to the welfare and safety needs of children means that it is not always possible to place a child in an internal Council provision. Where there are children with very severe needs, specialist placements would have to be commissioned. The type of needs which cause the biggest difficulties are -

- *Placement for teenagers – behavioural / criminal problems*
- *Specific need placements – unsuitable sexual behaviour, mental health needs*
- *Placements for children with severe disabilities*
- *Placements for large sibling groups*
- *Parent and child placements”*

2.6 An “End to End” review was undertaken in the Children and Families Service recently and it was noted that there was substantial expenditure on out-of-county residential placements. Having a strategy that will increase the choice of internal placements with workers and carers who have specialist skills will be essential if this expenditure is to be reduced.

3. How do the Council's arrangements tie-in with the Welsh Local Government Association's checklist for the role of a corporate parent?

3.1 Training and information for members – Following establishing the latest Panel in July 2012, training was arranged for members in November of the same year. Each elected member was invited to the training. The training included information about the role and responsibilities of members and members were asked to consider and discuss various situations faced by looked after children in Gwynedd. 24 members attended. It is intended to hold further training during the coming year (8 January 2014 at 2:00pm in Porthmadog); however, work will need to be done beforehand to emphasise the importance of the role and encourage members to attend. It is certain that there will also be a need to consider various methods of raising awareness of the field.

3.2 The Council's Statement on corporate parenting – Members of the Corporate Parent Panel have decided that a Corporate Parenting Strategy, that will include a clear statement regarding the Council's vision, should be drawn up. The work has commenced and it is expected that engaging with children and young people who can contribute because of their experience in care will be a part of this process. Each Department will be expected to commit to the objectives included in the Strategy.

3.3 Specialist training for members who could come into contact with looked after children

Apart from the training arranged annually for members, no further training has been offered to members who could come into contact with looked after children. It could be argued that what is needed is communication skills with children and young people in general, along with an understanding of the situation of each individual, rather than any skills deriving from specialist training. Nevertheless, further training could be considered if that is the members' wish.

3.4 Matters of concern to looked after children and young people

Through discussions with looked after children and young people on many levels (from individual discussions with social workers, to discussions at review meetings, to gather views from the Customer Care Unit to conversations within special meetings for looked after children such as Have Your Say), it is believed that we can be comparatively confident that the Panel is aware of the main matters that cause concern to looked after children and young people. However, discussed below is the need to strengthen structures and engagement processes with children and young people by giving them confidence and empowering them to contribute in a proactive and firm way. This would need to be a central part of the Panel's work over the coming year.

Listed below are some of the matters that caused concern to the young people to whom panel members spoke:-

- There is a need for more information about the placement before commencing there.
- Challenge of changing schools (in particular if it happens more than once), and the effect on education.
- The need for support in schools for looked after children.
- The need for a social worker who listens, who can answer difficult questions and who makes things happen.
- The need for support from other Council departments, apart from Social Services.
- The need to acknowledge how critical and difficult the 14-16 year old period is.
- Difficulty to obtain assistance outside office hours at times.
- The need to collaborate more with post-16 education colleges to ensure that no discrimination occurs.
- The need to ensure that housing associations, when making decisions regarding housing allocations, consider the background and experiences of young people and avoid placing young people in accommodation that causes them any stress.
- The need to ensure fair employment opportunities.

These are the concerns that will drive the work programme of the Corporate Parent Panel.

3.5 Arrangements to commence discussions with looked after children and responding to their viewpoints – Each looked after child or young person has a social worker and his/her case will be reviewed regularly by an independent officer. It is required for these workers to see the child by him/herself and ensure that he/she has the opportunity to voice opinions and express views regarding his/her situation. This is the first step in terms of starting to engage with children and young people.

3.5.1 In addition, the Senior Manager - Children and Families Service and elected members (Cabinet members), along with the Children Services customer care officer, meet regularly with a group of looked after children and children who have left care, in a group called “Speakout”. This group has existed for 10 years in Gwynedd and meets with a number of young people every quarter outside normal working hours. The meetings are ones that are led by the young people themselves – they set the agenda, they chair the meetings and they minute the meetings also. The officers and elected members are there by invitation and the main purpose is to give the young people for whom the Council has parental responsibility an opportunity to have direct access to officers and members who are able to influence practice and policy. It is an opportunity for them to share their experiences about being a young person who is looked after (or in aftercare), and gives an opportunity to provide their opinion on what they would wish to see change in the interests of other young people in the future. Some of the messages listed above in 3.4 are as a

result of some of the discussions held at this group. Feedback from these meetings is provided to the Corporate Parent Panel.

3.5.2 In addition, an officer from the Customer Care Unit will gather the views of looked after children regularly (by means of questionnaires, group meetings and individual meetings, subject to the preference of the young person) and will report on her findings to the Panel.

3.5.3 It is also ensured that looked after children and young people have access to advocates who are prepared to speak on their behalf or to assist them to express their views and ideas in various “formal” situations. Gwynedd Council has a joint service level agreement with Conwy and Anglesey with NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) to provide this statutory advocacy service.

3.6 Mechanisms to ensure that the Council seeks the views of looked after children and young people and celebrates their achievements – In addition to the above and as noted in the Panel’s Annual Report, the Panel requests, and receives, direct input from looked after young people on occasions. This has included “honest and challenging” input from services users, referring to their experience of being in care.

3.6.1 A presentation from two young persons who had left care was also received.

3.6.2 The Panel intended to continue with regular input of this type; however, there was also a need to develop the engagement process further and ensure that it contributed to the Panel and Council’s systems. In order to do so, there is a need to spend considerable time encouraging and giving children and young people confidence to participate. There is also a need to decide who would be best to lead on such work as there will be a need for an element of independence along with capacity to be able to work with the children over a period of time. Without doing so, there is a risk of the entire process becoming tokenistic.

3.6.3 In terms of celebrating achievements, this is undertaken in a method is was suitable for the child or young person – it could be a card or letter of congratulations from the Chair of the Panel or the Chief Executive, Statutory Director or Senior Service Manager. This could be publicised further also; however this would be at the request / upon permission from the young person and his/her family (where appropriate). There certainly was a need to develop the “celebrating success” agenda further and consider...if it were my child, how would I celebrate? Currently, the young people are of the view that they do not wish to see an “event” to celebrate success just because they are looked after children as this would make them different to their peers.

3.7 Occasions (at least once a year) for looked after children to contribute to Gwynedd Council meetings – There are no specific occasions for looked after children to contribute towards the Council’s meetings (apart from their input to the

Corporate Parent Panel as seen above). It is difficult to consider how this could be implemented at present without the experience being a very threatening one for the child or young person. Possibly, the secret is to develop the engagement agenda as noted above and nurture the confidence of young people so that they can contribute to formal meetings in future. This is a matter to be discussed further in order to agree on the way forward.

3.8 Opportunities to hear from foster carers and celebrate their work. At the end of March 2013, 106 foster parents were registered with Gwynedd Council - the highest number to date and the service is consistent in reaching its assessment and registration target of 20 new fostering units within any year. A robust recruitment strategy has been in place for many years and recruitment events target special locations in the County, for example, a shop was hired in Pwllheli for a week last year, there is an advertisement on the back of an Arriva bus that travels throughout Gwynedd, there is an advertisement at the Bangor City Football Club and these bring positive results in terms of attracting and recruiting. By now, other Counties contact us asking for advice and guidance to develop recruitment skills as we have proven so successful.

3.8.1 Structures are in place within the Children and Families Service (Fostering and Adoption Unit) to support foster carers in their day to day work. The standard of this work has been praised regularly by independent inspectors from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.

3.8.2 The Council acknowledges the work and takes an opportunity to thank the carers in general and celebrate the special successes at an annual dinner arranged by the Service. Usually, the Press Unit ensure that the event is publicised in local newspapers. This evening is an important one for foster parents and for the Council and awards are presented to specific foster parents who have reached significant milestones in their fostering careers.

4. Arrangements to share practical responsibilities across members and Council officers

4.1 Although each elected member and staff member is a corporate parent, many have a key role in the process of ensuring that our vision is achieved in relation to looked after children and young people.

4.2 In relation to Social Services, the Statutory Director has specific duties, and similarly the Senior Manager - Children and Families Service and the staff of that service. Also, the Care Portfolio Member and Children and Young People Portfolio Member hold the same responsibilities.

4.3 In terms of the children of Gwynedd in a more general sense but with emphasis on the needs of the most vulnerable children, there is a responsibility of the Lead

Member for Children and Young People and the Children and Young People Portfolio Member. In addition, Gwynedd has a Children's Champion amongst its elected members.

4.4 With the emphasis on children and young people, the Corporate Parent Panel includes elected members and cross-departmental officers collaborating on the same agenda to ensure that looked after children are safe and receive the best opportunities in life. This is the strategic body that sets the agenda for the Council as a whole.

However, the existence of the Panel cannot reduce the responsibility of each elected member and officer to be corporate parents to these children. Whilst we are clear regarding the structure and sharing of responsibility, there is further work to be done in relation to raising awareness of the field.

5. Membership, responsibilities and arrangements of the Corporate Parent Panel, giving attention to good practice.

5.1 The Corporate Parent Panel reports to the Council's Cabinet and it is chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People. The Panel has a standing membership, including the following Cabinet Members:-

- Gwynedd Council Leader
- Lead Member Children and Young People and Portfolio Leader - Education
- Cabinet Member – Deprivation
- Cabinet Member – Care.
- A member nominated by the Scrutiny Committee
- The Champion of the voice of Children and Young People

along with the following officers:-

- Chief Executive
- Corporate Director and Lead Director – Children and Young People
- Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Services
- Head of Education Department
- Senior Manager – Children and Families Services
- Service Manager (Care Resources), Children and Families Services

An invitation could be extended to a representative of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, a representative of the third sector or any other agency as required.

5.2 The responsibilities of the Panel have been noted in the Terms of Reference adopted by the Panel recently. The document notes the Vision of the Panel, namely:

"Ensure that children in public care have the same outcomes as every good parent would wish for their own children."

5.3 It also notes the Aim of the Panel, namely:-

"Collaborate effectively to ensure that every looked after child and young person in Gwynedd has access to the best opportunities in life."

5.4 Along with the objectives (based on the 10 Basic Rights of the Child), namely:

"Ensure that children and young people who are in Gwynedd's care:

- Have the best start in life.*
- Have access to a comprehensive variety of educational and learning opportunities to enable them to achieve their potential.*
- Are able to enjoy the best possible health and be free from persecution, abuse and exploitation.*
- Have opportunities to participate in cultural, play, leisure and sport activities.*
- Have someone who listens to them, be treated with respect and be able to profess their race, language and cultural identity.*
- Have a safe home and community that supports their physical and emotional well-being so that they have a strong sense of belonging and being appreciated.*
- Are free from disadvantages caused by financial poverty.*
- Can develop skills and promote enterprise and make a positive economic contribution and a contribution as citizens of the future".*

5.5 Amongst the panel's responsibilities are:-

- Promoting the welfare of looked after children and young people in Gwynedd.
- Ensuring and demanding collaboration between agencies and partnerships for the benefit of the children.
- Coordinating services for every looked after child and young person from the pre-natal period until their 21st birthday (or 25th birthday if they are in education or training).
- Promoting the rights of the children and young people.
- Providing a vision and setting strategic priorities for services for looked after children and young people.
- Receiving the views of children and young people about their care.
- Receiving information about the current condition of looked after children in Gwynedd and the provisions available for them.
- Promoting awareness of the duties of officers across the Council.
- Acknowledging and promoting the work of foster carers who provide services for looked after children in Gwynedd.

5.6 The new-look Corporate Parent Panel was established in July 2012. Panel meetings are held every quarter; however, it reserves the right to call an urgent meeting should the need arise. The Panel reports to the Cabinet and to individual Cabinet members in relation to matters within their portfolios.

5.7 The Panel receives direction and information about good practice and best practice from specialist officers who are members of the Panel. Attention is given to best practice on a national and international level and such examples are reported upon as relevant. An example of this is the current use made of research when commencing work on drawing up a Corporate Parent Strategy.

6 Measuring the Council's success as a corporate parent – the current assessment of the work

6.1 To date, the Panel has depended (possibly excessively), on information associated with a number of national and local performance indicators on a national and local level where the emphasis has been on quantitative information rather than on the standard of services and provisions. Annual reports are received from Independent Review Officers who summarise the performance of the Review and Quality Unit; from the Service Manager (Resources) within the Children and Families Service, which focuses on relevant statistics; and a report from the Head of Education Department noting the achievement of schools in relation to providing the Personal Education Plans of Looked After Children. Once again, it is seen that the emphasis is placed on the quantitative and despite the fact that the information is useful and important in terms of providing an overview of the field, the information regarding the standard and quality of the service and provision for children and young people is scarce. The information regarding the general impact of the Council, or the Corporate Parent Panel in particular, as a corporate parent on the lives of these children and young people is also scarce. The major challenge for the Panel in the coming weeks is to consider the objectives agreed upon in the Terms of Reference and ask “How will we know that we are succeeding?” and “How can we testify to that?” This will be a core part of the Work Programme. From examining best practice in other councils, it can be seen that the majority find it difficult to testify to the impact; however, certainly one of the most effective ways is to speak with the children and young people and foster carers regarding their experiences and ensure that they are included during the work of planning, developing and evaluating a strategy and work programme for the Panel.

6.2 In relation to the Council itself as a corporate parent, work has taken place in relation to training members and 24 members attended training last year. The 2013-2014 work programme includes, amongst other things, addressing further training to members and staff, along with raising awareness of corporate parenting Policies and Guidelines. Every service will be expected to develop such policies and guidelines to be approved by the Panel and it is expected that the services will subsequently report on success against the intentions.

7. Closing Statement

7.1 This report was prepared as a response to a number of questions raised by the Services Scrutiny Committee regarding the work of the Corporate Parent Panel. The answers given, along with the Panel's Annual Report that was presented to members recently, gives a taster of the Panel's work. A challenging agenda faces the Panel members, in particular in relation to ensuring corporate commitment and in relation to ensuring a real voice for each child who comes into care and who leaves our care as a Council. We are confident that the Council can rise to the challenge and act as one in the interests of the children and young people for whom we are responsible.

NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	28 November, 2013
TITLE	Update on the Gwynedd Leisure Centres Sufficiency Review
AUTHOR	Ian Jones, Senior Development Manager, Social Services, Housing and Leisure Department
PORTFOLIO LEADERS	Councillor Paul Thomas
What needs to be scrutinised and why?	An opportunity to consider and scrutinise the recommendations of the Report of the Gwynedd Leisure Centres Sufficiency Review completed by 'Just Solutions' external company.
Is there anything else the Scrutiny Committee needs to do?	Note and agree to the next steps.
What are the next steps?	1. Report back to the Area Forums. 2. Consider the implications of implementing the recommendations. 3. Develop an action plan.

1. Background

- 1.1. As part of a Strategic Review of the Leisure and Energetic Activities field, a sufficiency review was commissioned on the leisure centres provision by 'Just Solutions' external company.
- 1.2. This was done as a consequence of the company having completed similar work in other nearby authorities and for the entire north Wales region. The members will recall that the Cabinet Member circulated a Decision Notice to this end in January, 2013 (http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy_doc.asp?cat=7861&doc=29362&Language=2&p=1&c=1). Specific discussion sessions were held in the Area Committees and every Member had the opportunity to contribute to the review that has taken place.
- 1.3. Briefly, the purpose of the review was to:
 - 1.3.1. Inform the Council of the local necessary provision to address future needs, identify possible schemes for improvement, rationalisation and development.
 - 1.3.2. Secure the best possible management arrangements in order to take advantage of the improvement agenda and what the people

of Gwynedd wish to have as facilities, which was identified earlier in the Review.

2. The Current Situation

- 2.1. The company carried out the field work between January 2013 and the end of May 2013, and a final draft of the report was received in October 2013.
- 2.2. An executive summary of the report is provided in Appendix 1 which notes recommendations and the direction of the provision to the future, together with messages on the operational procedure.

3. The Financial Situation

- 3.1. Members will be very aware of the financial situation that the Council faces. The full Council, at its meeting in December, will consider an update on the financial challenge, and the timescale of the financial challenge for individual services will subsequently become clearer.
- 3.2. As you know, the service is not a statutory service which poses a particular challenge for the Council at a time when we will be looking at our core services. Comments in the national press already note this with the service often being used as an example of a service that is under threat.
- 3.3. Consequently, and whilst this was always a consideration when the work of producing the sufficiency report was completed, there will be a need to weigh up what the service can achieve within the new financial climate ahead of us.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. During the Area Committee meetings, I noted my intention to report back to those forums when it was possible practically. This is so that Members have an opportunity to voice their opinions on the recommendations and obtain feedback from the Consultants.
- 4.2. Particular attention should be drawn to the fact that the proposals in the Appendix are those made by the Consultants only. As a Cabinet Member I will consider what is practical to implement and request the approval of the full Cabinet when significant decisions need to be made.



**Gwynedd Council
Leisure Services
Sufficiency Review
October 2013
Draft Report
Executive Summary**

**Just Solutions
Leisure Consultants**

This is an executive summary of the 2013 Leisure Sufficiency review conducted on behalf of Gwynedd Council to inform future provision and plans.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

General Principles

The review report recognises that Leisure Centre closures are not the way forward but that fundamental changes - revised opening hours and new approaches as well as different co-location models to achieve more footfalls as well as savings - will all have to be considered if services are to be maintained in a climate of ever increasing financial pressures.

Furthermore, betterment can only be achieved with the bringing together of services – creating more reasons for more people to use facilities, alongside new models of management embracing different approaches, appropriate to each community - all with a focus on the headline outcome of improving the health and wellbeing of the people of Gwynedd.

It is also recommended that setting up a trust to manage the current portfolio of facilities in order to achieve immediate tax savings does not necessarily represent the right long term solution for Gwynedd – certainly not in the first instance. Changes in tax benefits may be on the horizon and the long term commitment to a new universal management model is likely to restrict the scope to make future changes and achieve other savings and betterment. There is no 'quick fix', instead a range of new approaches are needed which it is anticipated should deliver target savings that exceed the NNDR savings that would be achieved by putting facilities into a trust management model.

Two to Three Year Modernisation and Change Programme

The report emphasises that the many challenges facing Gwynedd Council - maintaining services across a large geographical area, for many small communities with particular rurality issues to overcome - cannot be successfully addressed as a result of any single new approach contained in any one service. Instead, a fundamental change programme is recommended that will impact across the range of community as well as central operational services and will need to be implemented over a 2-3 year period.

Wider than Leisure - Corporate Decisions Required

The benefits and efficiencies set out within the report are unlikely to be secured without their consideration and adoption at a senior corporate level – the proposed gains cannot be achieved through changes to Leisure Services in isolation.

Leisure Investment Outcomes

The alignment of Leisure for the purposes of improving health outcomes is quite clearly central to Gwynedd Council's vision for preventative action i.e. encouraging increased physical activity levels in order to reduce the pressures on Health and Social Services.

However for such a strategy to be successful the only truly cost effective 'vehicle' for achieving the health outcome is to deliver an inspirational education experience – creating a world where young people are responsible for their own healthy and active lifestyles and encouraging them to take a lead in the future organisation of sport.

Children and young people must be the focus – it is essential to influence lifestyles from the early years - this is where Leisure can make the biggest contribution to help address the 'health of the nation' issues.

The potential to impact on the most acute problems and burdens on the Health and Social Care Services is more difficult to address. Alongside this, it needs to be recognised that the majority of Leisure Service investment is in facilities, where most of the regular custom is not from the priority and 'at risk', target audience for Health and Social Care Services. There needs to be a greater Health Service commitment to fund any future ill-health preventative Leisure initiatives.

For these reasons, an impact on Health and Social Care priorities should not be the sole justification for future investment in Leisure. The Leisure investment case for education, regeneration and tourism, 'better community' objectives also needs to be championed. Physical activity and sport can significantly contribute to economic and community regeneration – the visitor economy and lifelong learning.

The report recommends that Gwynedd Council consider the following themes as priorities for the future Leisure strategy:

1. Motivating children and young people to adopt and maintain healthy, active lifestyles
2. Helping to keep older people involved and active in their local communities – more outreach, than Leisure Centre orientated - enabling local organisations to provide low cost ways of supporting older but less independent people to lead healthy lives
3. Supporting other providers e.g. the voluntary and private sectors
4. Encouraging greater use of the natural environment
5. Providing essential support, underpinning and celebrating sporting success
6. Providing specialist interventions as a public service only where there is both evidence of need and no other alternative provider.

Principles and Rationale informing the Future Priorities and Design of Services

No longer is it feasible to provide the same service to all... given the expected budget savings that will be demanded, the report recommends careful consideration is given to the rationale underpinning future service priorities – an ‘entitlement to business’ rationale is presented as a means of defining the scope of future provision - distinguishing between the purpose and unique/essential role of the Authority alongside those services that are ‘optional’ and can be delivered in a different way. These are summarised as follows:

- Essential ‘entitlement’ services – which the Local Authority has a duty to provide. For example:
 - education and learning - an entitlement for all young people to acquire literacy, numeracy and in the case of Leisure - physical literacy skills through an ‘inspirational’ learning experience.
 - compensation programmes – a responsibility to provide specialist interventions where no others will i.e. adult literacy; assistance to support people with special needs; home assistance - supported independent living programmes for older people
- Optional services – providing facilities to satisfy adult ‘leisure time’ activities – responding to ‘market choice’ for example:
 - the ‘business’ offer – market led activities serving a leisure and lifestyle need – personal choice amongst the adult community competing with a range of alternatives including commercial products – health and fitness; 5-a-side football; golf; ‘holiday leisure’; free outdoor recreation i.e. walking, jogging and cycling; many club sports.
 - these services will benefit from the application of more ‘commercial’ business models.

The process of distinguishing between such fundamental different purposes helps inform the rationale for the future provision. No different to other Local Authorities, Gwynedd Council wishes to ensure future services deliver better outcomes yet achieve efficiency savings. This demands a review and clarification of the service rationale, purpose and priorities – becoming an essential reference point informing future delivery – such principles should also apply across non-statutory and statutory services including youth and library provision but the principles can only be determined corporately.

STRUCTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The 'Leisure' Mix

In order to shape more efficient and effective community services the report recommends that the current 'Leisure' - sport and physical activity service be positioned and marketed alongside other 'leisure', 'culture' and community betterment and lifelong learning services – a complementary 'package' of community culture, leisure and lifelong learning products, services and facilities - libraries, theatres, museums and galleries, arts, play and youth services, community centres, church halls, schools - all a community resource for leisure and lifelong learning activities.

These services share the same wider health and well-being/better community/visitor economy purposes and outcomes and would benefit from the application of a consistent business and entitlement modelling.

Brought together, they can be managed and delivered to provide a joint community focus and better offer as well as a greater range of efficiencies i.e. co-location and management; shared outreach services.

Positioning Leisure in the Right Service Department

The report recommends that further consideration be given to the most effective future position for Leisure within the Council's structures if it is to increase community impact and achieve efficiencies.

The current departmental location of Leisure, set alongside Care Services, is not considered to be the optimal positioning. There is no doubt operational managers have worked hard to make the current structures work well and this has led to a number of improved methods of working as well as financial outcomes. However to achieve greater impact and support more radical change enabling more efficiencies the report recommends one of two more complementary placements:

- Either -
 - Education and Lifelong Learning – where the service can be better focussed on supporting children and young people to learn the necessary skills to enjoy a physically active healthy lifestyle aligned to the education and learning 'entitlement'.
 - Pros: a priority area; raised status for Leisure; better position to influence and support schools; supports a learning community model if adopted for future local service delivery
 - Cons: danger of becoming a low priority 'lost' within a bigger education service; not best placed to provide other adult and community services – the aforementioned business model
- Or -
 - Economic and Community Development – aligned to community regeneration and betterment and serving the visitor economy.
 - Pros: a closer all-round affinity between Leisure, Libraries and Culture services and delivering community development and economic regeneration; a separate

- 'platform' from which to commission and offer support services for the young people's entitlement as well as specialist interventions such as older people's activities
- Cons: a lower priority service mix and less affinity with the health outcomes

The Management Approach

The report refers to a number of different local as well as central management delivery models. A universal approach is not recommended – rather appropriate models that best serve the needs of different communities, building on the strengths of each local catchment area.

The management models proposed for consideration may be summarised on three levels:

- **Rural community models** - 'learning community' /'community enterprise' models – harnessing the strengths of the local communities – retaining and improving community services – making better use of local resources – facilitating local decision making and ownership – maximising the secondary school role – developing the local leadership role of Town and Community Councils - sharing resources and enabling the voluntary sector at the heart of future decision making. The approach securing more sustainable community delivery models including greater levels of co-location, shared management and resources.
- **Larger town models** - supporting and enabling the development of a stronger strategic management model for the provision of specialist leisure facilities in the larger population and tourist destination centres. The strategic managers, who have a higher degree of leisure management expertise could be also be used to provide support services to the rural community management models.
The larger town models would also be expected to pursue

more sustainable community delivery including greater levels of co-location, shared management and resources – particularly maximising the use and management of the large Leisure buildings for youth, tourism and library services.

Into the future, the strategic centres could be further reviewed alongside alternative management options including consideration of a more commercial approach; Trust management models etc.

- **Central management** – alongside the aforementioned changes in operational delivery leading to greater community independence or strategic specialisation, the report recommends a move towards a more streamlined, central model responsible for commissioning and reviewing delivery of the Council's priority outcomes and the provision, or 'purchasing' of, specialist support services where needed (in some cases this might draw on the specialist skills available in the strategic hubs).

MORE LOCALLY APPROPRIATE OPERATING POLICIES

Different Facilities and Communities

The report recommends a range of more specific approaches appropriate to each locality. These are briefly summarised as follows:

- Special priority to be given to supporting the communities of Tywyn, Dolgellau, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Bala, Bethesda and Penygroes – developing new ways of overcoming rural disadvantage and isolation – in order to maintain the leisure offer but through new approaches to management and sharing of resources – embracing, engaging and supporting the education and voluntary sectors and allowing the design

of different opening hours and pricing policies to better suit local circumstances and needs

- Re-shape the Barmouth offer looking at options for service co-location and a greater management alignment with the commercial/visitor economy
- Re-design of the future aquatic offer in Bangor to take account of new development plans alongside a rationalisation of the existing leisure offer
- Review of the Arfon Tennis Centre to consider more 'commercial' mix of facilities
- Re-shape the design and use of Porthmadog Leisure Centre to bring together a wider range of services (Library and Youth) under one roof and management.

Generic Recommendations

- Further align the aquatic plan to the Swim Wales vision
- Develop a vision and plan in conjunction with the Outdoor Partnership to maximise the use of the outdoors.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The 2015/16 and beyond budget targets will become increasingly challenging for Leisure. The cost of maintaining the current leisure stock will naturally result in a greater focus on buildings and how they are managed - this will continue to be a headline issue.

Over the last 3-4 years the Centre Managers have made great progress reducing the net running costs of the Centres – with the overall operational recovery increasing from 49% to 57% with a further projected increase to 64% in 2012/13 – a net saving of over £470k over 3 years set to exceed £800k over 4 years by the end of 2012/13.

All the Leisure Centres have delivered improvements, for example: increasing the number of direct debit payees; reducing staff costs;

and improved marketing - all assisting in generating additional income.

However, with Leisure Service spending in Gwynedd still above the national average and Local Government cuts set to worsen from 2015, it is considered that further significant savings will only be achieved by introducing more radical changes.

This study has not entailed a detailed interrogation and analysis of the current financial performance of each individual Leisure Centre to inform specific efficiency savings (although a number of practical changes are recommended for different facilities in the report).

This was not felt to be an appropriate first step. Instead it is recommended that consideration needs to first of all be given to a sequence of principles:

- i. the rationale (business/entitlement)
- ii. different local delivery models and options
- iii. options for shared cross-service management and co-location models
- iv. leading to a review of central management models

All of the above would inform future operational change and lead to a wide range of efficiency savings as well as better community solutions.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TITLE	Scrutiny Committee - Services
DATE OF MEETING	28th of November, 2013
ITEM TITLE	Implementation and Grant Expenditure on adaptations for disabled people
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr. John Wyn Williams

1.0 Introduction

Gwynedd Council's Housing Department administers the Disability Facilities Grant Scheme which allows for adaptations within private sector properties. Different arrangements exist for housing association tenants and for Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd tenants and these arrangements have been outlined within the this report.

The Disabled Facilities Grant is intended to support people who have a disability to receive adaptations to allow people to remain in their own homes and to help maintain their independence in the community. The grant can be used towards a range of different adaptations including the installation of ramps, adaptations to bathrooms and kitchens, the installation of stair lifts and on some occasions purpose built extensions.

2.0 Discussion

2.1 Disability Facilities Grant – (Private Sector)

Disabled Facilities Grants are mandatory grants in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and funded from Gwynedd Council's capital resources. Gwynedd Housing Department's expenditure on the Disabled Facilities Grants varies from year to year depending on the number and complexity of the work undertaken, but is usually between £900k to £ 1.1m per year. The fund is used to respond to the needs of owner occupiers, and with the consent of a landlord, people who rent private properties. A statutory maximum of £36k of has been set for the grant however the Housing Department can contribute an additional amount using discretionary powers. Gwynedd Council has established a Discretionary Loan in order to realise plans which exceed the expenditure threshold. The Discretionary Loan is usually awarded to allow completion of complex modifications or extensions predominantly for children and young people with disabilities or people with acute or long term conditions.

Applicants for grant assistance are subject to a Means Test (except when the disabled person is a child) and the Department's performance in meeting its duties are inspected externally. The timetable for completion of work is one of the core performance measures set by the Welsh Government.

As noted, the level of expenditure and demand upon the budget does vary from year to year depending on the extent of the work completed during the year. This is highlighted below.

Disabled Adaptations Grant	
Financial Year	Actual Expenditure
2009/10	£1,088,480
2010/11	£926,840
2011/12	£931,620
2012/13	£1,121,520

The average level of grant application is usually between £7,000 and £8,000. However this may be impacted if a number of extensions are completed within the same financial year.

It is the responsibility of Council staff (Occupational Therapists) to approve and present applications for the Disability Facilities Grant. Although Occupational Therapists employed by the Health Service can suggest adaptations any assessments undertaken have to be approved by Occupational Therapists employed by the local authority before being presented. Currently the Social Services Department employs a total of 14 Occupational Therapist – this comprises 7 Occupational Therapists who work in the areas, 3 Senior Practitioners 1 Children’s Therapist and 3 Rehabilitation Therapists. The Therapists focus on trying to maintain people’s independence at home using a range of support and equipment. As part of their work they will consider different intervention and exercises. Based on this assessment and the impact of other interventions they will then decide on the appropriateness of presenting a Disability Facilities Grant application.

2.2 Minor Adaptations Grant – Help at Home Scheme

In addition to the Disability Facilities Grant the Housing Department also contributes from capital resources towards Minor Adaptations Grant. This scheme allows for small individual adaptations up to £350 which can be completed quickly usually within 15 days of referral. The scheme is targeted at owner occupiers and private tenants and is administered by Care and Repair who receives further grant assistance from the Welsh Government. The purpose of the scheme is to promote expedient access to a range of small adaptations which will reduce the cost and demand on care services. The scheme is usually focused on

facilitating a return home after a hospital stay with the aim of avoiding more comprehensive and costly adjustments in the future.

	Small Works and Minor Adaptations (Individual packages which cost less than £350)	Period 2: 1 Oct 2012 – 31 Mar 2013	Period 1: 1 Apr 2013 – 30 Sep 2013
1.	Number of service users who received urgent minor works.	341	320
2.	Percentage of works completed within the 10 day target	96%	96%

The target for completing the minor works is 10 days from receipt of the referral from the Social Services Department. Work is undertaken by craftsmen employed by Care and Repair. The scheme was established specifically to try and expedite the process of completing adaptations and to ameliorate the need for some DFG applications which are allocated for adaptations likely to exceed £1,000. The Housing Department have ring fenced a sum of £100k a year towards the scheme and Gofal a Thrwsio attracts additional funding. Applications are prioritised according to need, there is no requirement to undertake a means test and adaptations do not require planning permission. Whilst advantageous to reduce dependency on the Disability Facilities Grant it may influence performance as work which is referred will be of a more complex nature and will require a longer timeframe

2.3 Adaptations for Disabled Housing Association Tenants

Tenants who require adaptations who reside within a Housing Association property can apply for Physical Adaptation Grant (PAG). PAG's are funded from the Social Housing Grant subject to a maximum expenditure limit set by the Welsh Government, currently £8.5 million a year for Wales. Housing Associations are expected to fund minor adaptations to their properties within their own resources and PAG funding applications are reserved for major structural modifications beyond what the association can fund.

Housing Associations established following the transfer of Council housing stock are not eligible to apply for money from the PAG fund as it is expected that sufficient provision has been made within their business plans based on the pattern of expenditure within the Housing Revenue Account prior to stock transfer.

2.4 Disabled Adaptations within Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd

The Transfer Agreement specified that a sum of £600,000 be allocated for disability adaptations when Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd was established, with a commitment for a period of 30 years and an annual inflationary increase. This allocation is intended to be prioritised for referrals from Council employed Occupational Therapists with an understanding that any remaining funds could contribute towards to a program of adaptations to meet the needs of disabled tenants as part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. Any surplus funds are then transferred from one year to the following year. Responsibility for

administering the arrangements lies with Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd who have employed their own Occupational Therapists (2) to oversee WHQS works.

During 2012/13 it became apparent there was pressure on the allocated funds with commitments beyond the funding identified. Subsequently discussions were held with Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd to consider the prioritisation of applications and it was agreed to establish a panel to review the situation adjustments. It appears that those measures have eased the budgetary position and it is expected that the demand for disability adaptations as part of the Welsh Quality Standard will abate over the next 18 months as the program draws to a close. However it is recognized that there will be a need to carefully monitor the pattern of expenditure as the demand for adaptations can vary significantly from year to year depending on the nature and complexity of cases. It will also be important to consider the opportunities which exist to make best use of the existing housing stock and especially houses that have been designated or adapted for people with disabilities.

Financial Year	Transfer Agreement Commitment	Actual Expenditure	Over spend or under spend	Budget available +/- over or under spend
2010/11	£600,00	£565,086	-£-32,914	£600,000
2011/12	£616,800	£676,430	+£ 24,716	£651,714
2012/13	£630,366	£513,101	-£117,265	£605,650
2013/14	£645,000			£762,264

3.0 Timetable and Process for Completing an Application

The Department must follow a set process when preparing an application which includes a number of essential components. The precise steps and the allocated timetable will vary depending on the projected cost and nature of the work to be completed. If major building works are required e.g. an extension the team will follow a process similar to the one outlined below.

	Essential Elements with anticipated timeframe	Timeframe
1	Referral to Social Services	
2	Assessment of Need “Essential and Appropriate ”- Occupational Therapist	2 Weeks
3	Referral and Assessment “Reasonable and Practical ” – Housing Service	2 Weeks
4	Completion of Means Test and collection of documents– Service User	4 Weeks
5	Instruction to Proceed and Completion of Draft Plans	2 Weeks
6	Discussion - Occupational Therapist / Grant Officer/ Service User	
7	Approval of Final Plans	Variable

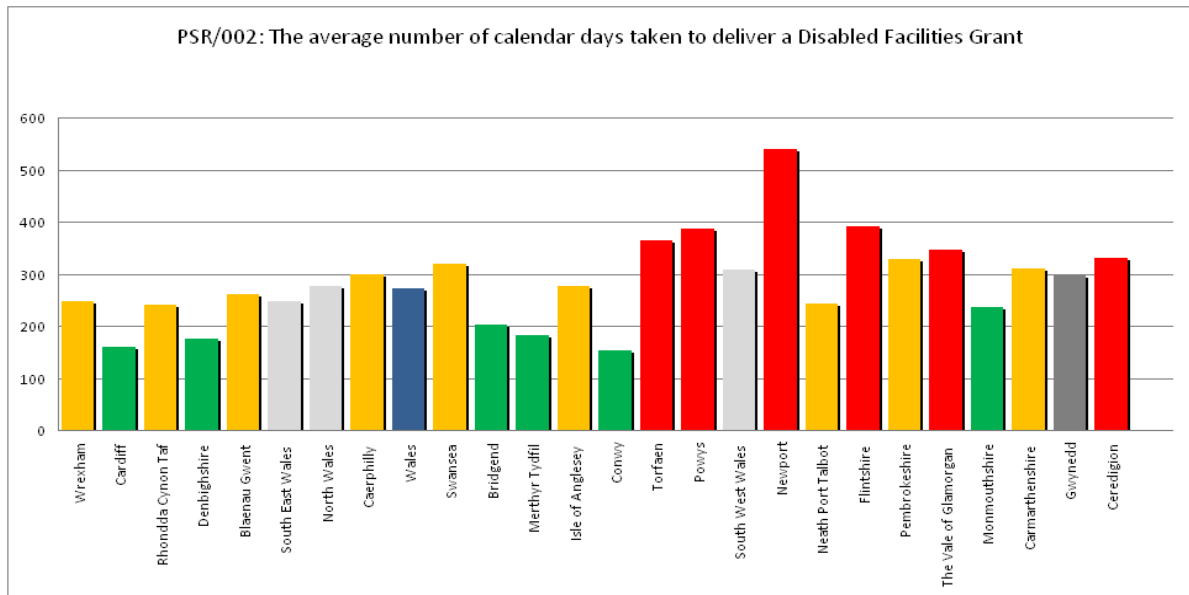
8	Present application for Planning Approval	6 weeks
10	Building Regulation and Pre Tender Works (if relevant) e.g. i) Section 104 agreement to build above a drain ii) Completion of Structural Engineer's Report	Variable
11	Completion of Tender Documents	2 weeks
12	Tender Period (minimum 3 weeks)	3 weeks
13	Tender Review and contractual negotiation	1 week
14	Instruction to Proceed to Contractor .	4- 6 week
14	Work on Site	Variable
15	Handover and inspection	1 week
16	Approval and Completion	1 week

Whilst every effort is made to align different elements within the process the above table demonstrates the challenge of completing large projects within the timescales of the performance measure and explains why some projects will exceed the timetable. Although it is possible to omit some of the steps completely and complete the work more quickly in some instances e.g. adaptation of a bathroom or installation of a stair lift there are some mandatory steps . Currently over 50% of the work is completed within 175 days.

A analysis of recent cases highlighted that a number of different factors which could contribute towards a delay intrestingly the most common was difficulties securing information and approval from applicants. As a result we have now stipulated that information must be provided with 2 months. If no information is received we can suspend the application and re-open when information has been received.

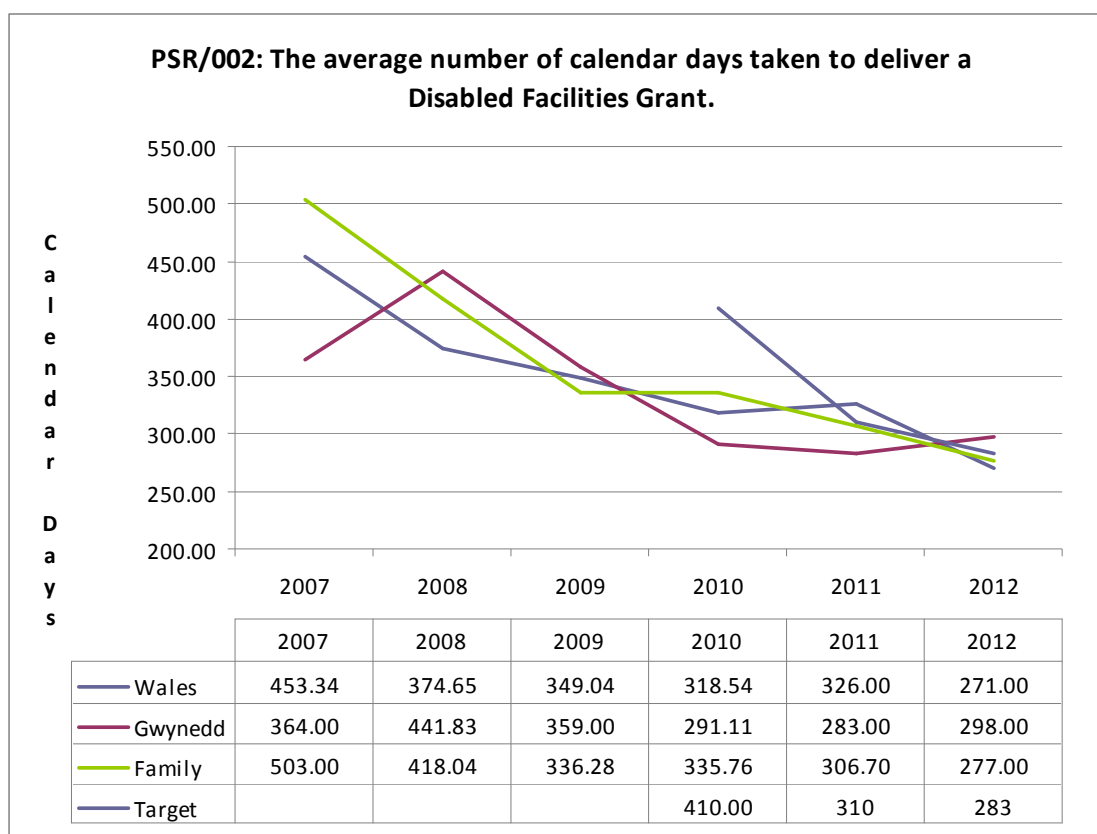
4.0 Departmental Performance Measures

The Housing Department report annually on a number of performance indicators and Gwynedd's performance has improved over the last 3 years. We must however highlight the need for some caution as the nature and complexity of individual work packages impacts on performance. It is totally fair an feasible to expect a stair lift to be installed in less than 3 months however this type of timescale would be impossible for an extension which will take at least 12 months. The Assembly have recently acknowledged the need to review the performance measures to ensure greater consistency in terms of what is measured and the type of work completed.



	Gwynedd Target		Performance 2012-13
PSR/002* Average number of calendar days to provide a Disability Facilities Grant	280 days	The Department review performance on a quarterly basis but it can sometimes be misleading to use this as a proxy for annual performance. The pattern of work tends to increase during the year and one long term case can impact on the target.	298 days
GTLLEOL2ADDASIA D13-14 Percentage of grants (DFGs) which are completed within 175 days on completion of the assessment	Need to establish baseline 52.5% to date	The Departments need to establish a local baseline for the % of work undertaken within 175 days which corresponds to the best performance in Wales. We have established that 52.5% of cases are within this target 21 cases out of 40.	New Measurement
GTLLEOL3 Percentage of service users who confirm they are happy or very happy with the work undertaken on completion of works	90%	On completion of works we disseminate a questionnaire to service users to try and measure their satisfaction with the process and areas which could be	96%

PSR/006 (SID) Average number of calendar days to undertake minor adaptations which are low cost in private properties where Disabled Facilities Grant process is not applied	15 days	Gwynedd use adaptations which cost less than £350 to calculate this measurement.	8 days
PSR/009a (SID) Average number of calendar days to provide a Disabled Facilities Grant to Children and Young People	380 days	This measurement can change significantly as is often based on a small number of cases some which are long term and complex. There is a need to examine this measurement carefully to consider the impact of the individual cases on the average.	



Appendix 1 - GUIDELINES FOR THE ADAPTATIONS GRANT

Adaptations Grant for Disabled People?

The adaptations grant for the disabled is available to support disabled individuals complete necessary adaptations to their homes, thus enabling them to continue to live independently and safely in their own homes. The aim is to facilitate reasonable access into the home and its main rooms, which includes the lounge, bedroom, bathroom with bath or shower facilities as well as appropriate toilet and wash basin facilities.

Assessing the Application

Before authorising any grant application a formal assessment must be received by an Occupational Therapist employed by The Social Services Department). The Occupational Therapist will:

- Confirm that the proposed adaptations are “**essential**” and “**appropriate**” for the disabled individual.
- Complete an assessment of the disabled individuals’ home and provide a professional opinion on what adaptations are required to meet the individual’s needs.

The assessment will then be presented to an Housing Grants Officer who is responsible for identifying the best way of completing the adaptations within the property and to decide if the proposed adaptations are “**reasonable**” and “**practical**” to complete.

On some occasions not all of the proposed adaptations can be fully completed as they may not satisfy the above principles and in such instances the Housing Grants Officer has the authority to reject the application.

If a Housing Grants Officer decides to authorise an adaptations application then they are committed to satisfying the needs of the disabled individual as identified by the Occupational Therapist.

During the assessment the Occupational Therapist will consider the long term practicality and viability of the adaptation. This is especially the case in instances where the disabled individual is suffering from a degenerative condition and where there is a possibility that further adaptations may be required in the future. Consideration will also be given to other means of meeting the disabled individual’s needs.

Who will assess and decide the application?

The needs assessment and formal request for adaptation will be completed by an Occupational Therapist employed by Gwynedd Council. Should the assessment and referral for adaptation be presented by another qualified individual other than a Gwynedd Council employee e.g. an employee from a Health Authority, then it will

be essential for a Gwynedd Council Occupational Therapist to certify that the proposed adaptations are “**necessary + appropriate**” and in line with legislation.

Schedule for completing the work

It can be difficult to specify a timescale for completing work at the beginning of the application process as there are a number of different variables such as the nature of the adaptation, size and complexity of the work which will collectively influence the time schedule. Providing there aren't any unexpected complications or that a substantial adaptation is required, the estimated time to complete most adaptations is between 37 to 43 weeks starting from the date of the Occupational Therapist formal assessment. It's possible for small scale work such as fitting a stair lift to be completed in a lesser timescale of 8 to 12 weeks.

Is it necessary to complete a means test before starting the work?

All grant applications (private sector) excluding those for children are subject to completing a statutory means test which will consider the candidates personal financial circumstances and ability to contribute.

Candidates will need to disclose all information relating to income and benefits along with details relating to savings, investments and assets.

In order to determine whether the candidate needs to contribute towards the costs of adaptations the means test will be completed at the beginning of the adaptations assessment process. Applicants are also required to present documentation confirming ownership and right to adapt the property.

Operational Standards

Only work listed under the adaptations legislation can be considered as valid. The authority is also requested to differentiate between what is “**desirable**” and “**aspiration**” by the candidate as well as deciding what is **essential** and **reasonable** to fund by public funds further to a professional assessment.

The Council cannot authorise work that isn't related to the adaptation or work that is above what is needed.

The candidate can request the Council to complete additional work on the understanding that the candidate will be responsible for organising and paying for the additional work themselves.

The maximum grant that is payable for essential adaptations has been established by legislation as £36,000.

Financial Summary

Title	Description	Budget
Facilities Grant for the Disabled	Grant up to £36,000 with statutory obligation to provide adaptations for disabled people to enable them to live independently in their own homes.	£700,000
Discretionary Loan for Disabled Facilities	Financial support for disabled individuals needing adaptations above the value of £36,000. It was decided in 2012 to present this as an interest free loan rather than a grant on the condition that the sum would be repaid upon the sale of the property. This is secured via a legal charge. Enables necessary adaptations to happen especially where the needs are complex and long term.	£200,000
Minor Adaptation Grant (Help in the Home Scheme)	Optional Grant to provide small scale adaptations that cost up to £300 e.g. install handrail. The scheme which is managed by <i>Gofal a Thrwshio</i> completes work quickly (within days).	£100,000
Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd Adaptations Fund	Fund is designated in the Transfer Agreement on the basis of previous Council expenditure to provide adjustments for disabled people.	£600,000
Physical Adaptation Grant	Central Fund for Housing Associations to undertake significant adaptations for people with a disability.	£8.5m across Wales