



Complete Agenda

Democratic Service
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Meeting

CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time

10.30 am, THURSDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER, 2023

NOTE: A BRIEFING SESSION WILL BE HELD FOR MEMBERS AT 10:00AM

Location

**Hybrid - Siambr Dafydd Orwig, Swyddfeydd y Cyngor, Caernarfon LL55 1SH
/ ZOOM**

*** NOTE**

This meeting will be webcast

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CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP (18)

Plaid Cymru (11)

Councillors

Menna Baines
Rheinallt Puw
Linda Ann Jones
Gwynfor Owen
Einir Wyn Williams
Jina Gwyrfai

R Medwyn Hughes
Dewi Jones
Linda Morgan
Meryl Roberts
Sasha Williams

Independent (6)

Councillors

Elwyn Jones
Eryl Jones-Williams
John Pughe

Anwen J. Davies
Beth Lawton
Angela Russell

Labour/Liberal (1)

Councillor Gareth Coj Parry

Ex-officio Members

Vice-Chairman of the Council – Councillor Beca Roberts

A G E N D A

1. **APOLOGIES**

To accept any apologies for absence.

2. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

To receive any declarations 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**

5 - 11

The Chairman shall propose that the minutes of the meetings of this committee held on the 22nd of June 2023 be signed as a true record.

5. **HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY AND HOUSING WAITING LIST**

12 - 14

To consider the report.

6. **ESTABLISHING A ONE STOP SHOP FOR HOUSING ENQUIRIES**

15 - 17

To consider the report.

7. **SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION INCLUDING LEARNING
DISABILITIES SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH AND SUPPORT FOR
WOMEN**

18 - 22

To consider the report.

8. **AUTISM PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP BRIEF**

23 - 25

To consider adopting the brief and to elect members to undertake the work of the Task and Finish group.

Agenda Item 4

CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THURSDAY, 22 JUNE 2023

Present:

COUNCILLORS: Menna Baines, Linda Anne Jones, Jina Gwyrfai, Dewi Jones, Linda Morgan, Meryl Roberts, Elwyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton and Gareth Coj Parry.

Officers in attendance:

Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Others invited:

Huw Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services)

Present for item 7:

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being).
Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)
Mannon Trappe (Senior Manager, Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Mental Health)

Present for items 8 and 9:

Councillor Elin Walker Jones (Cabinet Member for Children and Families)
Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)

1. TO ELECT A CHAIR FOR 2023/2024

It was resolved to elect Councillor Beth Lawton as Chair of the Care Scrutiny Committee for 2023/2024.

2. TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIR FOR 2023/2024

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Linda Ann Jones as Vice-chair of the Care Scrutiny Committee for 2023/2024.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Rheinallt Puw, Gwynfor Owen, Einir Wyn Williams, Richard Medwyn Hughes, Sasha Williams, John Pughe, Anwen Jane Davies and Angela Russell.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 20 April 2023 as a true record.

7. UPDATE ON THE GWYNEDD MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

An update was provided on the Gwynedd Mental Health Service. The members were reminded by the Senior Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Mental Health Manager that the Mental Health service had been an integrated team since 1996, and that the Health Board led on the service. It was detailed that the work was being guided by the Together for Mental Health Strategy, introduced by Welsh Government in order to improve the mental health provision available to support individuals in Wales.

It was explained that the service had been divided to offer support within primary services for low-level cases, and within secondary services for more intensive cases. It was confirmed that referrals were being received from GPs, before being scrutinised daily to consider if there was sufficient information to make a decision on suitability to receive a mental health assessment. It was noted that referrals were being referred back to the GPs with explanations, if they were not suitable to be referred to the relevant service.

It was explained that there were clear responsibilities within the partnership with the Health Board. As the Health Board led the service, the focus was on a diagnosis and medication on their behalf - the medical element. It was confirmed that Cyngor Gwynedd's role as a local authority was to focus on the social elements. It was noted that Cyngor Gwynedd also led on the work under the Mental Health Act 1983. It was emphasised that workers were the service's main resource as they offered therapy and support to individuals to overcome or cope with their illness.

It was confirmed that Cyngor Gwynedd employed staff in a number of different roles in order to offer this service, including:

- 2 Area Leaders (North and South Gwynedd)
- 12.5 Social Workers
- 9 Support Workers to work more intensively with individuals on care and treatment plans (with a financial contribution from the Health Board to employ them).

It was intended to re-model the current multi agency mental health scheme that Cyngor Gwynedd and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board had, following a consultation with the Head of Adults, Health and Wellbeing Department, Senior Mental Health Manager and the two Area Leaders for Mental Health Services. It was highlighted that there was a need to review the role of the Support Worker within the service and a need to review out-of-county placements in order to ensure that we understood individuals' aspirations to return to the area or not.

It was reported that difficulties had arisen across Gwynedd and the rest of Wales when local authorities collaborate with the Health Board in order to integrate Health and Social Care, including:

- Lack of clarity about outcomes
- Calling something a 'partnership' to make it sound better
- Lack of clarity about organisational drivers
- Lack of clarity about unstated motivators
- Being unrealistic and over-ambitious;

- Not enough attention to practical details.

It was confirmed that these general dangers were noted as core barriers by mental health leaders, which prevented them from realising their statutory duties effectively. It was noted that the level of these risks had increased and were having an effect on staff well-being making them feel isolated and not an integral part of the partnership.

Details were given on another risk which affected the partnership by confirming that the Health Board used paper-based systems rather than technology systems (such as WCCIS). It was explained that using paper-based systems to collect sensitive data was dangerous and acted as a barrier to information sharing and effective service planning. It was explained that this led to additional risks including:

- Governance risk: regarding secure data management
- Communication risk: regarding the recording and sharing of current information
- Role risk: about fulfilling the statutory role outlined in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

It was noted that a number of options had been considered for providing these services in the future, including:

- a) Continuing in the form of the existing service.
- b) Reviewing a new partnership arrangement for a period of one year, with quarterly meetings to review the arrangement/progress.
- c) Transferring to a separate social care/well-being team/service which coincided with establishing a well-being preventive social pathway for people who used the services.

A strong view was expressed that the current arrangement was unsustainable. In addition, there was a feeling that establishing yet another partnership agreement would not resolve the key issues or indeed mitigate the significant risks identified. The current model offered limited assurances of an effective and secure partnership

It was confirmed that a model such as option C above would be most suitable for Gwynedd as it would be a purposeful well-being model and would promote the key objectives. It was explained that these concentrated on:

- Mitigating the current risk due to the poor communication regarding progress and change by the Health Board.
- Providing greater ownership of well-being, social prescription and the social model of mental health recovery.
- Providing the opportunity to review services to promote a focus on prevention through greater ownership of primary care.

It was ensured that the information presented in the report was used in order to develop a business case to steer establishing a separate social care mental health well-being service, before creating a report on the further steps that would concentrate on detailed research of the project management process for establishing a separate Social Care Mental Health Well-being Service. It was noted that there had been several attempts to consult with the Health Board's Director of Mental Health to share ideas, plan and agree

on how the Council would work with them.

In response to the observations and questions from members, it was noted:

- That a number of other authorities, namely Conwy County Borough Council, Wrexham County Council and Flintshire County Council had already decided to establish a separate partnership to the Health Board, and that Anglesey Council was in a similar situation to Cyngor Gwynedd and were considering the future of their services.
- It was confirmed that robust collaboration was ongoing between the Health Board, Cyngor Gwynedd and the Government by working in partnership. It was noted that some of the other authorities that had brought the joint-service to an end had seen an improvement in the collaboration between them and the Health Board under their new arrangement.
- It was noted that the aim of Welsh Government was to integrate health and social care. It was explained that although the new model was contrary to that principle it would certainly strengthen the collaboration between both bodies in accordance with the principles of the Welsh Government.
- It was agreed that collaboration problems had existed for years, even before Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board had been established. It was noted if the model was not successful, the Department would acknowledge that and would be accountable for this.
- It was explained that there was a consultation with Social Workers and Support Workers within the service to get their input on the 14 June 2023. It was reported that the majority of those workers welcomed the change with some concerned as they had a good relationship with the Health Board staff. It was shared that the workers were looking forward to the changes.
- It was confirmed that regular communication was taking place with the other local authorities that had separated from their partnership with the Health Board in order for Gwynedd to learn from their successes and failures before establishing the most suitable model for the future.
- It was ensured that the process of separating from the Health Board was being programmed and the Care Scrutiny Committee would receive regular updates. It was noted that the Cabinet's approval was needed in order to move forward with the model, but that the department was confident that the new model would be operative by April 2024. It was emphasised that this date was not final and that there was a strong possibility that the timetable of the model would be amended.
- Details were given on the need to look at the financial costs as the number of referrals to the service were increasing quickly, noting that there was around 2000 more referrals this year compared to 2020.
- That the Cabinet Member would contact the Health Minister in order to explain the collaboration problems that arise between local authorities and the Health Board.

It was confirmed that separating from the Health Board in this field was not a failure. It was emphasised that the Health Board succeeded to provide excellent medical care for clients and that the model intended to be used in the future would be used in order to cope better with the social aspects of the care.

The department was thanked for their work within the mental health care field.

RESOLVED:

1. To accept the report and support the department's plans to establish a new work model for the Mental Health Service.
2. To ask the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being to contact Welsh Government's Health Minister to explain the intention to create a new work model and the reasons for that
3. A progress report and regular communication between the officers of the Department and the Care Scrutiny Committee on the development of the Mental Health Service was welcomed.

8. WORKFORCE OF THE CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES SERVICE

The report was submitted by the Head of Children and Supporting Families department noting the following main points.

It was confirmed that the report was an update to what had been submitted to the Cabinet in November 2022 on matters that affect the Children's Service in relation to attracting, recruiting and retaining professional staff. It was explained that the Service had faced difficulties in this field during the 2020/21 year, following the Covid-19 pandemic and that the staff had decided to leave and get other jobs, or leave the profession all together. It was emphasised that the situation had improved by now and that there were no current vacant posts within the service.

It was stated that there were four fields to take action on in order to respond to the challenges that appeared in the service, namely:

- Salaries
- Attracting and retaining staff
- Investing in new workers
- Developing staff welfare

It was explained that salaries was the main matter that was affecting attracting and retaining staff. As a result of this, it was seen that staff were leaving to work for other authorities in order to take advantage of flexible working terms. It was noted that many jobs were being advertised numerous times before appointing staff, and that the salary scale often needed amending before attracting applicants.

It was mentioned that the Department was trying to identify talent within the present workforce and provide opportunities for individuals to gain qualifications to develop their careers. It was noted that the staff that received that support stayed to work with the department for a long time. Also, it was confirmed that this assisted the Department to ensure that the staff were bilingual.

It was pleasing that the Department was now attracting applicants when advertising jobs. An example was shared of Autism related Jobs advertised recently where there were 20 applications for 4 posts.

It was explained that the Department was trying to avoid using agency staff where possible. It was noted that difficulties could arise when trying to use the agency as only one week of notice needed to be given before they finished working for the Department. In addition, it was noted that most of the agency staff were non-Welsh speaking and that their salaries were around 40-70% higher than the usual rate. Despite this, it was confirmed that a maximum had now been set on agency staff salaries. It was confirmed that no agency staff had worked for the Department for around 7 years as a result of their success filling posts.

It was noted that the department was eager to continue to provide encouragement and to give urgent attention to important matters when inspiring and leading. It was explained that there were three possible strategic options to follow, namely:

1. Continue in the same direction and maintain the status quo.
2. Choose a transformational, ambitious method.
3. Choose a proactive approach towards continuous improvement.

It was confirmed that the Department favoured the third option above as it was an achievable option to resolve the Department's challenges. It was confirmed that they needed the support of the Council to implement this option in the future as the number of applications that reached the Department had increased significantly over the past few years. It was explained that there were 7175 applications in the 2022/23 financial year compared to 2500 in the 2019/20 financial year.

In response to the observations and questions from members, it was confirmed that the Salaries Working group had considered a number of options for the future including offering qualifications for individuals in the middle of their careers.

The department and the social workers were thanked for their continuous work.

RESOLVED:

The report was accepted and support was expressed to the intention of the Children and Supporting Families to place focus on the four main matters noted in the report as a response to the staffing situation, whilst acknowledging that some of the work had already commenced.

9. FEEDBACK FROM THE SAFEGUARDING REVIEW BY CARE INSPECTORATE WALES

The report was submitted by the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department noting the following main points.

It was confirmed that the Child Practice Review had been held in November 2022 concentrating on Wales Safeguarding Procedures, Working Together to Safeguard People and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

It was detailed that the review was trying to determine to what extent the current structures and processes ensured that children were placed on the Child Protection Register and also removed from it when safe to do so. It was also emphasised that it was an opportunity for joint learning, identifying good practice and positive systems of operating.

It was confirmed that Cyngor Gwynedd was one of five local authorities chosen to receive this review. It was noted that the review had taken place between 26th and 29th of March 2023 and that verbal feedback had been shared with the Head of Department and the Statutory Director of Social Services. It was explained that there was no specific report being published for Gwynedd, but that a composite report for the entire review would be published when the review came to an end.

A number of the findings that were relevant to Gwynedd were shared, including:

- That children in Gwynedd were benefiting from different agencies sharing information effectively.

- That there was a clear focus on risk assessment and to give specific attention to the threshold if the child had, or was likely to be suffering from significant harm,
- That clear decisions were made regularly and based on evidence.
- That good practice was in place and that the voice and life experiences of children were being taken into account when making decisions on safety.
- It was recognised that further work was needed to develop opportunities for children to take part in conferences.
- It was mentioned that the role of the social care practitioner was a valuable asset.
- It was noted that clear communication with parents would take place especially when staff were trying to explain to the parent why they considered that their children were in danger of significant harm.
- It was explained that the role of the case conference chair was essential in terms of reminding members of the objectives of the case conference held in accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

The Department was thanked for the report.

RESOLVED:

To accept and note the report.

10. CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD PROGRAMME 2023-24.

The Care Scrutiny Committee forward programme for 2023/24 was presented by the Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor following the decisions of the Members at the annual Committee workshop held on 9 May 2023.

It was noted that two items remained to be scheduled for this year, namely:

- Autism Plan Task and Finish Group Brief
 - It was considered that this item would be submitted to the Committee in September.
- Autism Plan Task and Finish Group Report
 - It was noted that no date had been confirmed for when this item would be submitted to the Committee and that it depended on further meetings.

Members were reminded that the forward programme was a live document and therefore it was possible to amend the forward programme if additional matters arose during the year.

RESOLVED

To adopt the Committee's work programme for 2023/24.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.15pm.

CHAIR

Date:	21 September 2023
Title:	Common Housing Allocation Policy
Purpose:	Present an Update
Contact Officer:	Carys Fôn Williams, Head of Housing & Property
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Craig ab Iago

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In the meeting on 29 September 2022 the Care Scrutiny Committee agreed that the following aspects should be considered:
- Has the policy served its purpose which is to maximise the number of houses allocated to Gwynedd residents with a local connection?
 - Have there been problems with the new policy?
 - Do further modifications need to be made to the policy?
- 1.2 An interim report was presented to the Committee on 11 November 2022 with the intention to then bring proposed changes to the Common Housing Allocation Policy to the Committee in 2023 for members to provide their input.
- 1.3 It is a statutory requirement, in accordance with section 167 of the Housing Act 1996, for all local housing authorities in Wales to have a housing allocation scheme (or allocation policy) for setting priorities and the process to be followed when allocating housing. The Act and statutory guidance from the Welsh Government set out the rules that must be followed in formulating and implementing the policy.

2. Update

- 2.1 During 2022 the Welsh Government established a panel of experts in the field of homelessness and housing with a view to making recommendations on amending homelessness legislation to the Minister for Climate Change by the end of August 2023. Local authorities have contributed to the work of the Expert Review Panel with monthly meetings being held with Government officials during 2023 to gain the views of professionals in the field on the proposed reforms. Reviewing the housing allocation legislation referred to above is part of this area of work. Following the submission of the recommendations of the Expert Review Panel the Government will publish a White Paper on the fundamental reform of homelessness legislation, which is due to be published on 10 October 2023.
- 2.2 The content of this White Paper will clearly significantly influence any changes that can be made to allocation policies. We eagerly anticipate reading its contents and its impact on what can be done in terms of reviewing our allocation policy in Gwynedd.
- 2.3 **Has the policy served its purpose which is to maximise the number of houses allocated to Gwynedd residents with a local connection?** The Policy has been in operation for three years now, and in that time over 1700 public sector tenancies have been let through its use.

Priority band	Number of new tenancies
1A – Applicants in urgent housing need with a Gwynedd Connection	805
1B – Applicants in urgent housing need (without a Gwynedd connection)	26
2 – Applicants in housing need with a Gwynedd connection	680

3 – Applicants in housing need without a Gwynedd connection and Applicants with reduced priority	91
4 – Applicants without housing need with a Gwynedd connection	105

2.4 Applications that appear in bands 1A, 2 and 4 will have a Gwynedd connection, and whilst band 3 includes applicants in housing need but without a Gwynedd connection, a large proportion of applications in band 3 will be there because their priority has been reduced from band 1A or 2. Of the 1707 new tenancies, 1651 were allocated to an applicant who qualified for a Gwynedd connection in accordance with the definition in the Policy. This is 96.7% of all allocations. The corresponding figure when the previous Policy was in use was 90.0%, so there has been a significant increase as a result of the implementation of the current Policy.

2.5 Gwynedd Connection can be obtained for any of the following:

- Live in Gwynedd for 5 years (at any time)
- Family connection in Gwynedd for over 10 years. A family member with a parent, adult child, sibling who lives in the county, and has done for at least 10 years, at the date the application was made. The applicant and relative must need to live close to each other
- Providing support or receiving support from a person or provision in Gwynedd
- Working in Gwynedd for the last 5 years
- Offered a job in Gwynedd but with a disability and unable to accept the job due to difficulty finding accessible accommodation
- Need to move to Gwynedd so that a family member with a disability can attend school or get specialist support but it is not possible to do so due to difficulty finding accessible housing
- Serving in the Armed Forces in Gwynedd
- A former member of the Armed Forces, not currently in employment or living in Gwynedd who served in Gwynedd while in the Forces

2.6 It should also be considered that there may be statutory duties on the Council to homeless applicants where local connection cannot be considered as a factor. Specifically so in cases of fleeing violence or treats of violence including domestic violence. Having taken this into account, the figure of 96.7% clearly shows that Gwynedd's current Policy maximises as much as possible the opportunity for people with a Gwynedd connection to access social housing.

2.7 The Policy also includes an additional layer of 'local connection' in the form of an applicant's connection with a community. An applicant who has lived for 5 years in a Community Council area where they wish to move to will appear in the top half of their priority band, above applications in the same band without the community connection. This reinforces the opportunity for people to be rehoused in their local area. By looking at recent housing allocations we see that 54.7% are made to an applicant who has the community residency. This is significant, particularly given the natural demand there is for people to move from one area to another, and the availability - or lack thereof - of particular types of accommodation in each community.

2.8 **Have there been problems with the new policy?** Prior to the adoption of the Policy officers from the Council together with officers from the Housing Associations had tried to anticipate any problems that might arise from operating the new Policy. When there are significant changes to an allocation policy with a view to giving more priority to certain groups of applicants, it will inevitably be that some other applicants will miss out. This led to an increase in the number of complaints about the service when starting to implement the Policy, although the number of

complaints has now decreased significantly. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the staff at Gwynedd Housing Options for their dedication to their work since the adoption of the Policy and to making its implementation a success.

- 2.9 As the Council does not have its own housing stock, working in partnership with the Housing Associations is vital, and a healthy working relationship exists with daily contact between us. We have also set up a Specialist Housing Group which meets monthly. The Group's purpose is to review applications for specialist properties, for example properties for people with disabilities, where the general social housing stock does not meet their needs. The Group is looking at how these complicated needs can be met either through adapting existing properties or building new homes. There have been a number of positive solutions that have emerged from the Group's work which have produced positive outcomes for Gwynedd residents.
- 2.10 **Do further modifications need to be made to the policy?** With the housing market constantly changing our arrangements will also need to be flexible and we will therefore consider any changes in the context of the Policy which are possible within the statutory framework. As noted above, fundamental changes to homelessness and housing allocation legislation will be announced shortly, and therefore those recommendations will need to be analysed before reaching a final decision on a further review of the Policy.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 Accept and note the report.
- 3.2 Officers to report back to the Committee in due course on any potential implications for the Policy following assessing the contents of the Government's White Paper.

Agenda Item 6

Date:	21 September 2023
Title:	Establishing a One Stop Shop for Housing Enquiries
Purpose:	Provide an Update
Contact Officer:	Hedd Tomos, Assistant Head - Housing & Property
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Craig ab Iago

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of a report to the Care Scrutiny Committee on 17 March, 2022, an update on work to develop a service for Gwynedd residents relating to their housing enquiries was presented. In establishing a One Stop Shop, the Department is keen to introduce a system which responds to the needs of residents through submitting housing applications to one central point. This approach was discussed with the members of the Committee in the context of there being currently a number of contact points where the public access different services delivered by the Housing and Property Department which may mean that not all their needs are met.
- 1.2 In addition to improving customer experiences, establishing a One Stop Shop would enable a better understanding of our customers' general needs, together with the ability to highlight to internal managers if more resources need to be invested in specific areas.

2. Update

- 2.1 Several notable developments have taken place since the submission of the last report and the progress made is outlined in the sections below.
- 2.2 Engagement sessions with key partners (e.g. housing associations and third sector organisations) have been held over the last 18 months in order to identify if there were opportunities to strengthen the current arrangements and to note any potential impact on the nature of the contact which individuals have with the organisations. We consider that the process was useful in sharing information regarding the purpose and the referral process including, in some situations, ensuring that enquiries continue to go directly to external providers. Discussions are being held with all services within the Department and other relevant Departments to gain a better understanding of contact with our residents in relation to the enquiries that the One Stop Shop will support.
- 2.3 An initial consultation was held with the public in January 2023 to receive feedback regarding the general experiences of residents in relation to their contact with the Housing Department. 154 responses were received with the majority (over 50%) indicating that their experiences were generally good or very good and that their enquiry had received the appropriate attention.
- 2.4 The consultation highlighted that there is a clear expectation to be able to complete an online application form for social housing register applications with over 70% of responses indicating that this would be a positive development. This has already been identified as a priority by the Department, although there is no capacity within the current system to enable people to make applications online nor to enable staff to process the applications. As a result, hard copies of the applications must be provided, or a scan of the application needs to be sent as an email attachment. This is not the most convenient way for the customer nor the most effective way for staff to deal with enquiries.
- 2.5 Of those who answered 'yes' when asked 'is there anything we can improve?' (approximately 40%), over half of the responses highlighted the need to improve communication between the

Council and the customer. Specifically, in some situations, a lack of regular communication and lack of updates has been a problem and a better online presence to receive the information without having to call/email would have been beneficial. Although, on the whole, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the help and the consistency of the information received.

- 2.6 One of key steps for establishing the new system was the appointment of the One Stop Shop team leader in February 2022 which has enabled the Department to research how an appropriate structure could be implemented for the operation of the One Stop Shop.
- 2.7 Following the appointment of the team leader and as a result of an assessment of the nature of the enquiries received by the Department, it was concluded after internal discussions that it would be sensible to incorporate the Housing Options Team Unit into the One Stop Shop. This decision was taken following an assessment of the number of calls received by the Department and the number of visits to the Housing and Property Department web pages, which clearly showed that this work area received the majority of enquiries from the public. Therefore, as part of the induction process for new staff who are appointed to the One Stop Shop, full training for assessing Housing Options applications will be offered. The current staff of the Housing Options Team have also received training in dealing with general customer enquiries. The team structure is now almost complete, and a deputy team leader was appointed as part of this process in May 2023.

New system

- 2.8 It was noted in the previous report to the Scrutiny Committee that it was necessary to establish a new system to enable the Department to maintain comprehensive and current information in one central location. On the basis of the proposed changes to the internal staffing structure (as highlighted above), it was decided to also include requirements for the work of the Housing Options team and the Homelessness team.
- 2.9 As an initial step, research was completed on the kind of information the system will need to retain in order both to help residents and to collect information for key performance indicators. We also considered the opportunities to have a better online presence to facilitate the way that residents contact the Council and what effect this would have on the team (e.g. reducing the number of calls, and possibly changing the structure of the team). It is likely that an online presence would also lead to a situation where officers will be able to focus on the core nature of the enquiry rather than on administrative aspects.
- 2.10 A brief was prepared for the Corporate Category Team to identify systems which would meet our needs through the G-Cloud Framework 13. Subsequently, a tender process was held for the work and meetings were arranged with relevant companies requesting clarification that their systems would address the needs which had been identified and would align with our vision for the One Stop Shop. A shortlist of systems in the marketplace was drawn up based on set up costs, running costs, implementation schedule and system functionality. The successful company has been identified to complete the work for the Housing Options and the Homelessness system.
- 2.11 It is anticipated that the system chosen will modernise the service offered to the public. It will enable applicants to apply for social housing online and they will be able to see their application information including: band, property type, number of bedrooms and area preferences. It is hoped that it will be possible to notify officers of the One Stop Shop of updates to the application through the new system. To ensure that the system also meets the needs of the Housing Options elements of our external partners, an invitation was extended to representatives from the Housing Associations to attend sessions and receive their input.

2.12 The scheduled work is progressing including arrangements to set up the system, an operational trial period and dates for relevant training.

2.13 To ensure that there are sound arrangements in place for communication between the One Stop Shop and the internal systems of other departments, it was decided to use the internal FFOS system for the day to day administrative work of the One Stop Shop as it is already linked to the Council website and existing accounts on the website. These two new systems will be able to communicate with each other to facilitate the customer journey from the initial contact to the final one.

Single Point of Access (SPOA) Housing Support Grant

2.14 As stated in the previous Care Scrutiny Committee report, the Council has decided to establish a Single Point of Access (SPOA) for some of the projects and services which are funded through the Housing Support Grant. The internal arrangements are funded through the Housing Support Grant and the officers sit within the One Stop Shop. Generally, the purpose of the grant is to prevent homelessness and support people to have the ability, the independence, the skills and the confidence to obtain a stable and suitable home. The establishment of the SPOA will be a significant change to the current system. This will simplify the process for individuals who are referred to services and for providers who receive money from the Housing Support Grant. It will also enable a better overview of all the individual's needs when being referred to different services.

2.15 These arrangements will also enable the Department to have a better understanding of who receives support from the grant. Historically, it has been necessary to wait a period of 6 months to receive information about the results of the programme. The new system will mean that we can use this information to help commission new provision using current data rather than historical information.

2.16 The new SPOA system is currently being trialled by internal units and 220 Gwynedd residents have already benefited from receiving information and guidance with their relevant housing support needs.

3. Recommendations

3.1 To receive and note the report.

3.2 Officers to inform Committee members of the engagement process as the operational arrangements are implemented.

REPORT TO	GWYNEDD COUNCIL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	21 September, 2023
REPORT BY	COUNCILLOR DILWYN MORGAN OFFICER - HELEN FÔN OWEN
SUBJECT	LEARNING DISABILITY SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

1. PURPOSE

- Provide context and an update on the situation regarding Supported Accommodation for individuals with Learning Disabilities in Gwynedd.
- Share information on the current situation, new projects and the planning for the future work to provide supported accommodation of a high standard for individuals with learning disabilities in Gwynedd.

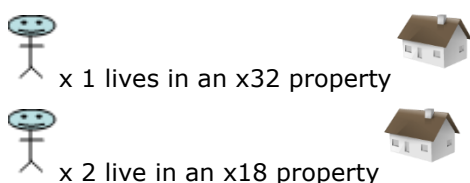
2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

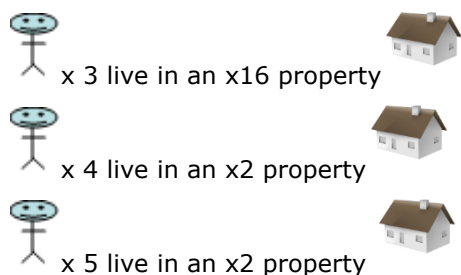
The Welsh Government's Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan 2022 to 2026 outlines the agenda for improving services for individuals with learning disabilities. This includes reducing health inequalities, promoting independence and access to advocacy and supporting access to education and work opportunities. Another priority area is developing and implementing an appropriate housing policy over the Plan period. Suitable accommodation is one of this plan's priorities. The Learning Disability Service in Gwynedd is committed to this priority by collaborating closely with the Regional Partnership Board to fulfil objections. We are collaborating with our partners and planning to develop supported accommodation models that are suitable to meet the needs and promote the well-being of individuals within our communities. An integral part of this is improving choice and empowering individuals. This includes where and with whom they live.

As individuals' needs vary, a range of accommodation and support is needed, this includes community housing, supported housing and specialist support to support individuals with complex and profound needs.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

During the last few years, the demand for accommodation and support has increased in Gwynedd. Currently, there are approximately 650 individuals on the learning disability register. There are 134 individuals with learning disabilities living in 70 supported accommodations across Gwynedd. They are divided as follows:





Currently, 32 individuals live in residential placements within the county and 21 individuals live in out-of-county residential placements.

INCREASE IN THE NEED FOR SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

The Learning Disabilities service works with individuals 18 years old and above. As part of the transition process from childrens services to adults services, there is close collaboration between the services, especially Derwen Specialist Team and After-care Team. This collaboration is essential to identify individuals that are transferring, plan strategically and ensure that this period is a positive experience and the support offered to individuals is as seamless as possible. A number of these individuals have complex and profound needs, and need supported accommodation after they turn eighteen years old. Some are already in residential locations/ specialist education, with some out-of-county.

In general, individuals choose to move out of their parents' home sooner than we have experienced in the past. This is mainly to achieve their personal desires and live independently.

A number of individuals receive care from older parents and the service supports the individuals and families to plan ahead for the future with some choosing to be introduced to accommodation and support to decrease the pressure on the carer and avoid an emergency situation in the future.

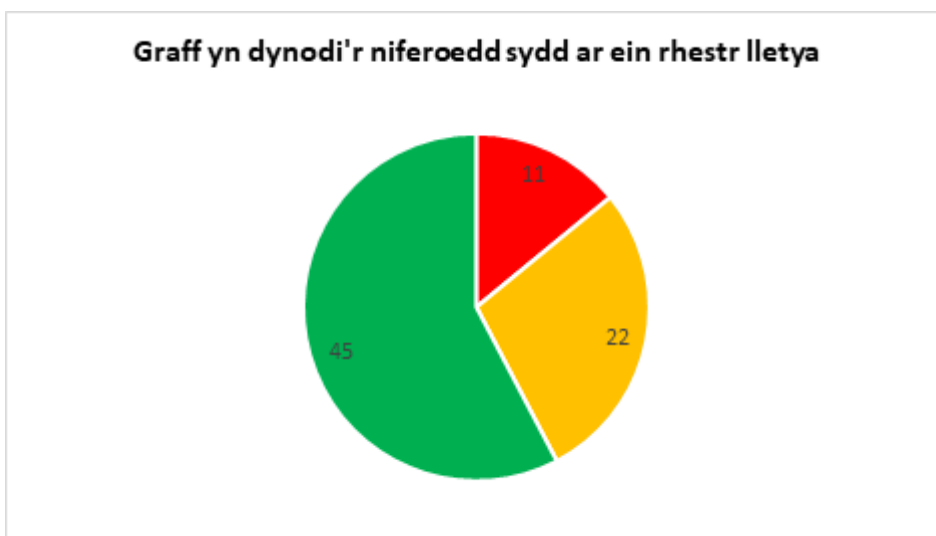
By improving the access of individuals with Learning Disabilities to Health services over the past few years, individuals live longer. By now, we have a number of individuals on the register who are over 65 years old. Research confirms that people with learning disabilities are more likely than the general population to suffer from Dementia and develop complex health conditions. The aim of the service is to support individuals to live within their homes as long as possible. However, this is not always possible and residential/nursing placements to meet complex health needs must be identified. Currently, there is not enough specialist provision of this kind for individuals with learning disabilities and it is challenging to discover suitable placements.

4. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The Learning Disability Accommodation Project has been established to identify and map accommodation needs across the county. The progress of this project is reported on through the corporate performance challenging regime. Any application for accommodation identified will be referred to the Accommodation Priority Forum - a forum that meets monthly to discuss and prioritise applications.

We are planning strategically as needed e.g., needing a bungalow for an individual with physical disabilities. We will also consider applications against any empty spaces that we have in supported accommodation or residential placement. Any work made to introduce individuals to a new placement is made sensitively and over a period of time to monitor and observe that the environment meets the needs and compatibility with other tenants.

As young individuals move from living with parents to living independently, they often receive 24/7 care. This is extremely costly and affects the service's overspending. It is the service's duty to promote opportunities for individuals to live independently but this is not always easy because, in reality, the staffing support is high in some cases and the cost and recruitment is challenging. The service introduces annual bids to meet this demand but, because of the wider financial pressure, the complete bids have not been successful over the last few years and this has contributed to the Service's overspending.



Graph showing the number of individuals on our accommodation list. Red represents those individuals that need priority (i.e., within the next year), orange represents those that need accommodation within the next two years, and green represents the individuals that need to be planned for over the next year.

Adapt current property for individuals to remain living in their homes

As individuals' needs change, their current homes will sometimes need to be adapted to ensure that the home is accessible, to promote and ensure the continuity of independence and decrease risks. If barriers are identified, this will be referred to ensure the completion of an Occupational Therapist assessment and complete minor adjustments or provide equipment. It is possible for the Landlord/Housing communities to complete improvements on the property under a grant application if appropriate. This has happened successfully with a number of properties.

5. STRATEGIC COLLABORATION.

Over the last few years, the collaboration with the stakeholders and our partners within the housing communities and Property department has strengthened. As a result of this, a number of new projects are underway and this means that it will be possible to increase the provision of accommodation in Gwynedd to meet the needs within the learning disability population. The Welsh

Government's capital 'HCF' (Housing with Care Fund) grant funding is being used to fund some of these schemes. This source has almost fully funded a bungalow in Groeslon and three tenants are in the process of moving into this property. It also contributes substantially to a property that is currently being adapted in Pwllheli.

There are plans in the pipeline to develop two accessible bungalows in Gwynedd, one in the Penrhyndeudraeth area and the other in Harlech. This property will be shared housing for three individuals each with 24-hour staff.

We have also identified a property in Llanrug. Following redesign, it will be a home for four individuals.

Currently, there are arrangements underway to introduce two individuals to homes on the Penyberth site, Penrhos, Pwllheli. The multi-disciplinary team have identified two suitable properties, 24-hour support will be commissioned. As the proposed project on this site develops, there is potential for another supported accommodation for the Learning Disability Service. This could be beneficial as it would intertwine with the wider vision of providing and integrating care systems to the site.

In addition to these developments, there are plans to develop a brand-new accommodation model on a residential home site in Frondeg, Caernarfon. This will ensure that the current provision is suitable for the future, offering shared or individual properties for Frondeg's residents and creating capacity to ensure there is a possibility to re-introduce out-of-county individuals to Gwynedd. It is anticipated that this provision will enable us to support individuals with complex and profound needs, some that are currently in costly specialist placements. It will also offer flexibility from a 'step up/step down' service with the possibility to provide support in a less intrusive environment with the ability to ask for additional staff if needed. As a way of meeting the lack of provision to older individuals with complex health needs / dementia, that are referred to previously in the report, it is essential that this project plans property and a care and support model to meet the needs of this group of individuals.

REGIONAL SUPPORT SERVICE – GYDA'N GILYDD SERVICE

The service receives support on a number of levels from the Gyda'n Gilydd Service, which is a regional team working across the six counties to plan and develop services and opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities.

From an accommodation point of view, we have received resources and support to develop person-centred schemes for individuals. Funding is available to employ a Person-Centred Planning officer (Person-Centred Planning PCP) who will work across Gwynedd and Môn, and we have also received training for positive behaviour support [PBS] and materials e.g., handbooks that are very useful resources to ensure the inclusion of individuals fully in the planning process for their new home.

For 2023/24, support will be available to plan a business application for the Capital Accommodation scheme for the next four years. As part of this, they will collaborate to create a Business Justification Case with the application for a Learning Disability Accommodation Project Manager a part of this. The support and these resources are welcomed to reinforce the work of planning and developing a workforce.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

It is good to state that there is good collaboration between the providers and the service in the learning disability field. This was seen during the Covid period, and the relationship and desire to co-produce, share resources and good practice, train staff to work within models such as Active Support and Positive Behaviour Support remains.

As is common across the care sector, recruitment is a challenge and this means that there are delays in moving forward with some supported housing projects as providers face the challenge of attracting and retaining staff within the field. Despite this, there is commitment to provide support of the highest standard to individuals with complex and profound needs to promote a home environment and opportunities that enable individuals to contribute and undertake the activities within their community.

Multidisciplinary teams, including social workers, specialist nurses and Speech and Language therapists, collaborate to support those individuals with complex and profound needs. To reinforce this, training and mentoring managers and staff in the PBS model, a specialist complex and profound needs team was established in 2021. This team is funded via RIF funding. Since the beginning of this project, the team has trained over sixty staff members and worked directly with over twenty individuals and the staff team to develop the least intrusive inductions and person-centred. In addition to this team, additional support is provided by the Health service to respond preventively to support where the home/accommodation situation is fragile and to promote transition periods seamlessly by introducing individuals to new homes or placements.

The service supports a high percentage of individuals with complex and profound needs; therefore it is essential to continue and enhance this work. The input of specialist teams will be essential moving forward with the work of returning out-of-county individuals and patients in hospitals back to placements in Gwynedd.

By now, this service and expertise is entirely integral to Gwynedd's services whilst supporting individuals with learning disabilities. Supporting and maintaining the service without a RIF fund would be extremely challenging.

Agenda Item 8

MEETING	CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	21 September 2023
TITLE	Autism Task and Finish Group
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	To adopt the brief and to elect members
AUTHOR	Vera Jones, Democracy and Language Manager

1. Following the presentation and update on the Gwynedd Autism Plan presented to the Care Scrutiny Committee on 20th April, 2023 the committee resolved to establish a task and finish group to gain further understanding. It was also resolved to request representatives from the Education Department and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to be present to answer concerns.
2. It was further resolved to invite representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to be part of the Task and Finish Group, as the work concerns the two committees. The Scrutiny Forum supported the way forward at a meeting in July 2023.
3. A brief for the work is attached to the report as an appendix.
4. A maximum of 5 members can be part of the Task and Finish Group and in accordance with the Council's Constitution, the membership must include representation from no less than two different political groups.
5. As the work concerns two scrutiny committees, it is requested that three members are elected from the Care Scrutiny Committee, and an invitation will be provided for the Education and Economy Committee to elect two members.
6. **The Committee is asked to:**
 - (i) **adopt the brief.**
 - (ii) **elect members to undertake the work of the Task and Finish group.**

TASK AND FINISH GROUP AUTISM PLAN BRIEF

What matter is being considered?

An update on the Gwynedd Autism Plan was presented to a meeting of the Care Scrutiny Committee on 20 April 2023. An update was submitted on the ongoing work, including an update on staffing, awareness raising steps, training and working in partnerships. In addition, the Cabinet Members responsible for Children and Adults Services submitted the priorities for the coming six months.

There were responses provided to several issues raised during the committee meeting, but some additional issues arose about the individual's experience when awaiting a diagnosis, frustration in the community regarding diagnosis waiting lists and a lack of clear understanding of the support available in schools following receiving a diagnosis.

The committee decided that they were keen to establish a task and finish group to discuss the matter further and requested that representatives from the Department of Education and the Health Board should be present to answer their concerns. It was also decided to extend an invitation to representatives of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee as the work bridges the work areas of both committees.

The purpose of the further work is to ensure an understanding of the support available -

- to individuals and their families when awaiting diagnosis, and whether there are any barriers on the road to a diagnosis and
- following diagnosis, in particular the support available for children within our schools, and whether there are any barriers.

Actions

- Care Scrutiny Committee to receive the brief and identify three Members to participate. (21/09/2023)
- Invite representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee (two members) to participate. We will correspond with members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee by email following the Care Scrutiny Committee's decision on 21/09, formally confirming membership at the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee meeting on 09/11/2023.
- Hold a meeting for the five members with representatives from the Children, Adults and Education Departments, and a representative from the Health Board. (Exact date to be confirmed following a discussion with key partners - anticipated end of 2023/beginning of 2024).

- Report back to the Care Scrutiny Committee - 1 February 2024 (depending on the date of the above meeting).

Key officers

A meeting will take place with the five members identified to take part in the task and finish group and the following key officers:

DEPARTMENT	KEY OFFICER
Children	Aled Gibbard, Senior Operational Manager
Adults	Helen Fôn Owen, Senior Learning Disabilities Manager
Education	Delyth Gibbard, Senior Communication and Interaction Teacher Dr Einir Peters, Senior Communication and Networking Educational Psychologist
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	To be confirmed.