

# CYNGOR GWYNEDD

## Report to the Cabinet

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	12 September 2017
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director
<b>Contact Telephone Number:</b>	01286 679468
<b>Title of Item:</b>	Children and Supporting Families Performance Report

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on the performance for the areas I am responsible for as the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families. This will include outlining the latest with the pledges in the Strategic Plan; where the performance measures have reached; and the latest in terms of the savings and efficiency.
- 1.2 I will remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the relevant management team, which also included a representation from the scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 On the whole, I am satisfied with the performance of most projects and measures for which I am responsible. As I have reported previously, a number of the performance measures in the children field represent a general increase in work pressure as a result of a high number of looked-after children.

## **2. THE DECISION SOUGHT**

- 2.1. To accept and note the information in the report.

## **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION**

- 3.1. In order to ensure effective performance management and that we respond pro-actively to the need to achieve efficiency savings as expected.

## **4. STRATEGIC PLAN PROJECTS**

### **4.1. P8 - Early Intervention / Preventative Programme for groups of vulnerable children and young people in Gwynedd**

- 4.2 The purpose of this project is to set a direction and to establish priorities for the preventative agenda in Gwynedd, working on a multi-agency basis to ensure that we focus our efforts on doing the right things in the right places. The project will ensure early intervention and will emphasise that the appropriate support should be made available at the right time for children and families. The intention here is to ensure that a clear programme of preventative services is available for children, young people and their families in Gwynedd, and that it has cross-sector ownership, including the third sector.
- 4.3 The work of re-commissioning and prioritising the resources of the Families First programme for 2017/18 is underway. An independent consultant has been commissioned who has commenced the work of evaluating the existing Families First programme in Gwynedd. The programme, in its current form, has been operational for four years and in planning for a future programme, we need better understanding of the successes of the provision over the period.
- 4.4 The evaluation will appraise the financial benefits of the existing programme and will consider the successes achieved for families in Gwynedd. It will also identify models of good practice and identify opportunities for a future programme. This evaluation will lead to planning for the future in accordance with Welsh Government priorities and local requirements in Gwynedd which have already been identified in the needs assessment, namely; speech and language delay; parenting and support with behaviour; access to low-level mental health services and support for teenagers.
- 4.5 We are in the transitional period of the existing Programme with the new Plan commencing on 1 April 2018. An evaluation report will be submitted in September 2017 and this will set the direction for planning the supporting families strategy in its entirety as well as structuring children and supporting families services in the future.
- 4.6 I look forward to update you on these schemes in my next report.

## 5. MEASURING PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 The performance against the measures generally reflects the increasing workload as a result of the increase in the number cases of looked-after children and children on the child protection register.
- 5.2 The trend continues in terms of the increase in the number of looked-after children. There are currently **224** looked-after children in Gwynedd. According to 'Stats Wales', the number of looked-after children in Gwynedd is the second-highest within the rural councils that we compare with. (March 2016 figures). Another field of 'risk' was identified within the department namely the increase in the number of children on the child protection register. There are **97** children on the child protection register currently which is an increase of 17 since quarter 4 (2016/17).
- 5.3 There was a detailed discussion at the departmental Performance Meeting about the reasons regarding this figure and it was highlighted that the number of babies coming into care was increasing. In addition, one thing which is causing some concern is the number of mothers who have been open to formal social services in Gwynedd, or who have been looked-after children in Gwynedd, with their babies also coming into care. It was also reported that there are cases where Young People who are looked-after children become young parents and that we see a situation where their children come into care also.
- 5.4 This repetitious pattern is a cause of considerable concern for me and shows a failure to break the cycle. The department reported, in response to this challenge that it intends to visit the 'Reflect' project which is currently being piloted in Gwent. The aim of this project is to reduce the number of children coming into care by working with young parents who have already had a child going into care with the intention to change the result for the next child and break the cycle. The early outcomes of this project are positive and I understand that there is a regional intention to invest in the programme.
- 5.5 In general, department officers praise the work of the Edge of Care Team which offers intense intervention to those at risk of going into care. We see from the performance measure **(TTG01)** that **65%** of cases have shown **an increase in line with the purpose of the intervention** and **94%** report seeing **a reduction in the obvious factors prior to the team's intervention (TTG02)**. Clearly, this is encouraging, but, when considering that only a small percentage of the workload can currently receive intervention from the team, I look forward to having further discussions with the department as it draws up its supporting families strategy to see how we can offer intervention to the families who need it.
- 5.6 The indicators involving looked-after children are showing some increase compared to the performance of earlier years. The **percentage of looked-after children during the year who have a Personal Education Plan within 20 days is 80%** (8 out of 10 children) **SCC/024**. But the Health of Looked-after Children indicator is generally under-performing. During the quarter, 20 looked-after children were awaiting a Health assessment. **(SCC/039 The percentage of health assessments for Looked-after Children undertaken during the year 56.2%)**. I will continue to monitor the progress against this measure over the coming months.
- 5.7 Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) within the department are responsible for supervising the case of a child and ensuring that the interests of the child are secured throughout their time in care. The legislation notes that the main function

of the IRO is to ensure that the child's plan is full and that there are action steps noted in the plan which are consistent with the legal responsibilities of the local authority towards the child. The IROs did not note any concern during the Departmental Meeting and the **(PMG11, PMG12, PMG13 and PMG14)** indicators show progress compared with previous years. But, with the increasing number of children coming into care and the legal responsibility on us as a Corporate Parent, I have requested a progress report from the IROs on their activity over the last six months which will also outline how we address our role as a Corporate Parent. I will be reporting on any findings in my next report.

- 5.8 An outline of PLO cases was reported upon during the departmental meeting. During Quarter 1 of 2016/17, 16 children have been discussed at an initial PLO meeting. PLO contracts are seen as the 'Final Option' to improve the situation before making an application to Court for a Care Order. Of the 16 cases, the department has submitted applications to the Court for a Temporary Order (ICO) in 10 cases. The other six cases remain on the child protection register.
- 5.9 The indicators involved with Child Protection Plans **(AP1, AP2, AP3)** show some slippage. The **percentage of Child Protection Plans, where there is no further incidents or continuation of current significant harm, without adequate change recorded since the last conference is 58% (AP2)** which is much lower than the average for **2016-17 (73%)** and **2015-16 (83%)**. One explanation for this is that a number of families have several children on the register. I will continue to monitor regularly and respond as necessary to these issues.
- 5.10 As I have already noted, we are currently in a transitional period with looking to re commission services that are funded through the Families First Grant. This allows us to set a new direction and consider new, ambitious and innovative priorities to support children and their families. To this end, we are in Gwynedd starting a new and exciting chapter in the development of services for Children and families. Children's Services to the future will extend their focus to develop a coordinated strategy with the principle aim of supporting families. The aim of the strategy will to combine the skills, resources and commitment of professional workforce across departments and sectors in a coordinated manner, which results in better outcomes for children and their families. The Head of Service will present the Strategy in September and I look forward to updating on these exciting developments.

## **6. SAVINGS/FINANCIAL POSITION**

### **6.1 2017/18 Schemes**

The schemes for this year are an extension of the previous year's schemes, and to a great extent, are involved with looked-after children placements. Though the Department is confident that the work programme in place realises savings, it will need to be borne in mind that circumstances outside their control can change the situation very quickly and the schemes are within budgets which can fluctuate greatly. The financial projections for the year currently suggest a risk that the Department will overspend, but it is too early to reach a genuine conclusion. History suggests that the demand on the service reduces a little over the summer months.

### **6.3 Schemes for 2018/19 and beyond**

In January 2014, a report was submitted to the Cabinet entitled "Improving Benefits by Transforming Children Services". This report anticipated that as much as £3m could be saved by reducing the number of looked-after children and reviewing the residential provision. It needs to be borne in mind that the figure noted was an estimate of the possibilities, and part of the savings has been included within other schemes in the filed which have already been realised. The Department is very aware of the challenge ahead. As has been reported to the Challenging Performance Team Meetings, its intention is to hold an early review of the financial outcomes of the scheme to date in order to try to seek better assurances that the savings anticipated for the future are achievable. The outcome of the review will be reported upon shortly, and if needed, for the Cabinet to approve any changes to the profile and/or the amount of savings anticipated.

## **7. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

**7.1. None to note.**

## **8. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION**

### **8.1. Views of the Statutory Officers:**

#### **i. Monitoring Officer:**

No comments from a propriety perspective.

#### **ii. Head of Finance Department:**

I am satisfied that the contents of the report are a fair reflection of the financial situation, with Section 6 confirming the issues already noted during the recent performance challenge meeting. The Department faces substantial challenges in seeking to achieve their savings plans due to the increase in the number of children who still come into care for the reasons noted. It should be remembered, in light of this, that the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance to the Cabinet on 18 July 2017 ("Revenue Budget 2017/18 – Identifying Early Risks") noted a possible overspend of £290k by the Children and Supporting Families Department in 2017/18 arising mainly in the area of child placement.

### **8.2. Views of the Local Member:**

Not a Local matter

### **8.3. Results of Any Consultation:**

None to note

---

## **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Performance Measures