

Report to the Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	29 January 2019
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Contact Officer:	Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director
Contact Telephone Number:	01286 679468
Title of Item:	Children and Supporting Families Performance Report

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on the performance within the field for which I am responsible 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 cuts schemes.
- 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 teams, which also included a representation from the scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 I am generally satisfied with the performance of most projects and measures for which I am responsible. Nevertheless, the Department faces significant financial challenges. There are no easy or short term answers to the increasing demand for services but I will work closely with the Department on plans that are under-way in which we attempt to address the challenge over the coming months.

2. THE DECISION SOUGHT

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

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

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

4. THE DEPARTMENT'S PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The Cabinet is aware that the 2 projects led by the Children and Supporting Families Department as part of the Council's improvement plan are the:

- Supporting Families Strategy
- Corporate Parenting Strategy

- 4.2 The purpose of the **Supporting Families Strategy** is to develop services, within the Council and with partners, that are far more integrated; focusing our interventions on the early identification of needs, targeting families correctly, and providing services that reduce the need for more serious interventions.

- 4.3 I can confirm that the work programme on the agenda is moving forward with updating needs assessments and analysing them at a local level for the Gwynedd population assessment. Further work has taken place to identify the demand for support for families across the Council's departments, in addition to mapping out the provisions that are already available to support Families across Gwynedd, and the way people gain access to these services. This work will improve our understanding of the current situation and will guide the way we plan our response to the needs, jointly with our partners.

- 4.4 The work of developing the **Supporting Families Strategy** and the recent Welsh Government announcement that it will merge its preventative grants, gives us an opportunity to reflect on the direction we are taking. Along with some of my fellow members, I am eager to look more broadly at the preventative field and the support we provide the residents of the County, across all our services, in order to tackle some of the barriers they face. Some residents need more support, and the Council invests in, provides and plans many services and interventions that tackle various issues such as: difficulties with parenting and raising a family, having and maintaining a home, maintaining healthy relationships, dealing with substance misuse, alcohol, violence, crime and the effects they have, living healthy and active lives, insufficient income and lack of work, inability to stay in education, lack of qualifications and basic skills, care, ageing, loneliness and lack of social contacts; and supports people to deal with them.

- 4.5 We, therefore, intend to establish a **Supporting People's Well-being Board** to look objectively at the way we support people. This will, of course, include looking at our systems through their eyes. The Board will include all contacts / services that operate under this agenda. The first meeting of the Board has been arranged for this month at which we will discuss our vision with our Departmental Heads and agree on the direction, scope and work programme. Thus, we will ensure that the best use is made of the available resources to meet needs without delay, jointly

plan services and appropriate interventions, and consider the efficiency of our current provision arrangements.

- 4.6 The purpose of the **Corporate Parenting Strategy** is to improve the opportunities available for looked-after children in every aspect of their lives.
- 4.7 Considerable work has taken place during the period to identify where improvements need to be made and identify good practice through the task groups that have already been established. I am of the opinion that this improvement priority has now been completed. The Panel has identified fields that require attention and a work programme has been drawn up to address this. This was reflected in the Care Inspectorate Wales report, which described the Corporate Parenting Panel as 'ambitious for looked-after children'.

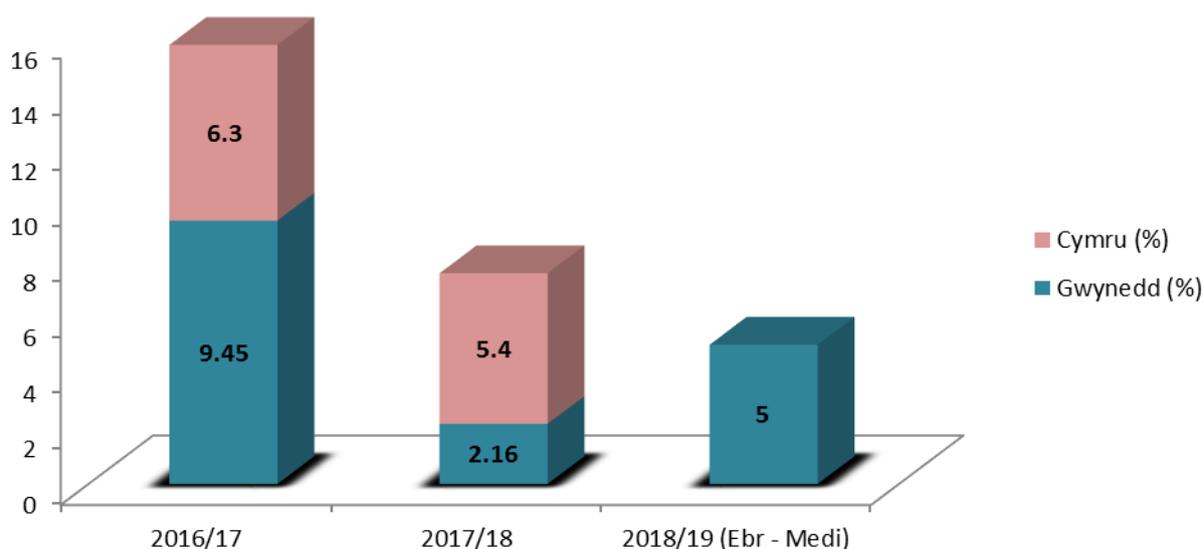
5. PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 In terms of the Department's Performance, the measures continue to suggest a strong performance in practice and safeguarding. The measures that showed some slippage since the previous quarter were scrutinised in detail by the Department's Management Team, and during the Department's performance challenge meeting. I can confirm that there is a reasonable explanation for all these fields to the level of individual cases.
- 5.2 The **Team Around the Family** and the **Edge of Care Team** continue perform satisfactorily, and the interventions seem to have a positive effect on children and their families who receive a Service. Nevertheless, the Department reported that it had some concern about the response among schools to concerns about individuals, specifically children who do not attend school. The Department takes the stance that better collaboration is needed between departments to ensure correct interventions are available early on to support the children and their families. There is concern that problems are being allowed to escalate within the Education system and opportunities to address some matters at a much earlier time are being missed. I can confirm that this discussion between the Departments has begun and I will update you about the situation as talks develop.
- 5.3 The **Referrals Team** have experienced some slippage to performance this quarter. **85% of assessments are completed within the statutory timetable (compared with 94%)**. I can confirm that the number of days beyond the statutory timetable are not very high. It is, however, worth noting that the measure includes statutory cases as well as preventative cases. I have suggested that the Department look at the measure in order to differentiate between cases.
- 5.4 The **Sef1** measure, '**Of the children who have moved school once or more during the time or times of receiving care, how many of the movements took place for positive reasons and for the well-being of the child**', remains high. We need to be vigilant in discussing this measure, as changing schools because of changing homes for the well-being of the child, could be a very positive thing. There are plans in place and a detailed understanding of the needs of each child, and a number of moves is not necessarily a negative sign. Because of these reasons, I have asked the Department to consider the purpose of this measure and whether there is a better way of measuring success in future.
- 5.5 The performance measures involving the Active Teams demonstrate a generally strong performance. The **SCC/015 Measure - Percentage of initial core group meetings that should have been held during the year that were held within 10**

working days of the initial child protection conference, shows some slippage (**85%**). There is a 10 day window to hold an initial core group conference. It is a challenging timetable and the slippage represents a very small number of late days. I can confirm that these cases have been thoroughly scrutinised and I believe the reasons to be acceptable.

- 5.6 The increase against the **PMC27 measure - Percentage of child re-registration on the child protection register (2 children, 5.6%)** is acceptable after hearing the reasons during the performance meeting. It relates to Safeguarding matters and is an appropriate response under the circumstances.

Canran o ail gofrestriadau ar y gofrestr amddiffyn plant

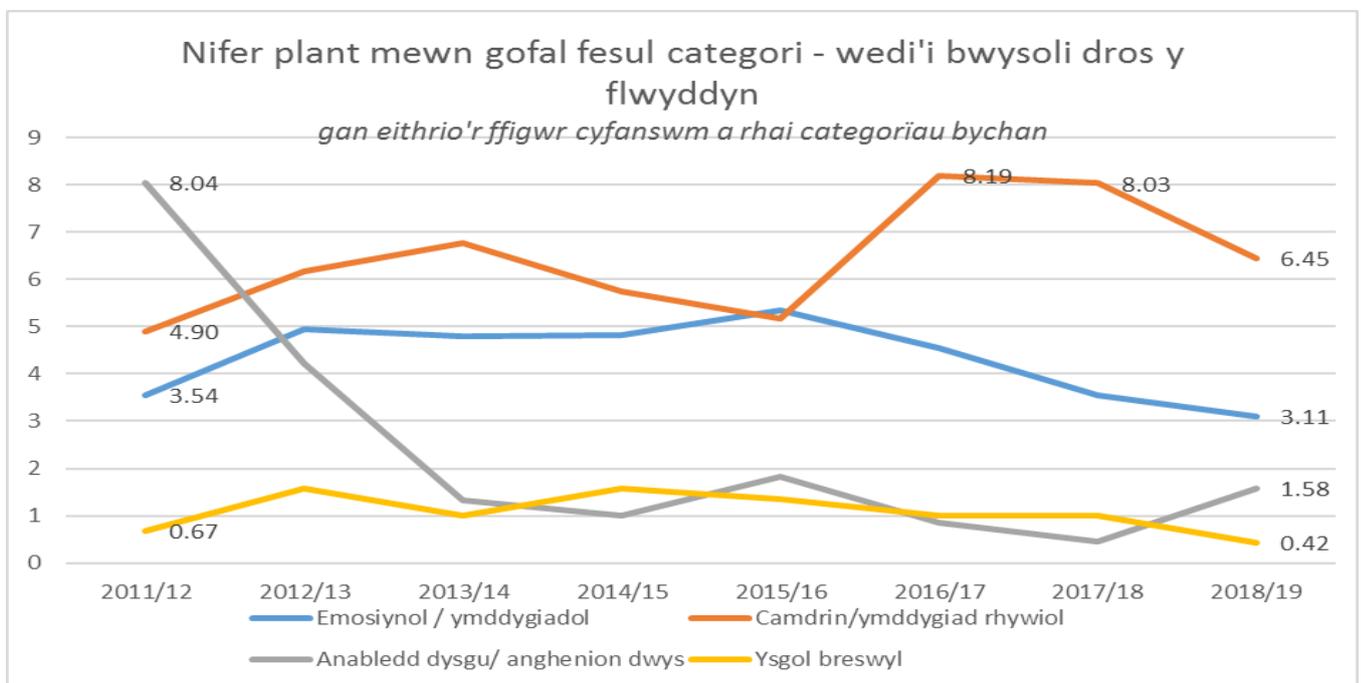


- 5.7 Two young people experienced homelessness during the period. **PMC35 Percentage of children who have experienced homelessness during the year 2.4%**. The Department noted that it was a lack of cooperation that had led to the individuals' situation, and individuals establishing themselves outside the County and losing contact with the Department. In response to the situation, the Department worked on developing contact, offering support, and arranging appropriate accommodation for them. The Department reported at the performance meeting that the matter had been resolved and that there were no longer any homeless young people. I have requested that the Department considers their response in the future i.e. improving links with neighbouring Counties.
- 5.8 Of the measures involving the Safeguarding field (**SCC21 and SCC14**), both these measures have slipped somewhat. The **SCC14** measure has slipped substantially (**SCC14 - Percentage initial child protection conferences that should have been held during the year and which were held within 15 working days of the strategic discussion 59%**). The Department is highly dependent on the IT System in order to coordinate conferences without delay and within a challenging statutory timetable. The main reason for the slippage in Quarter 2 was the problem with IT: the Council's system was down for three days. Consequently, the Department was unable to obtain information and documentation for the Conferences and this had a huge impact on the measure, as well as on the families in question.

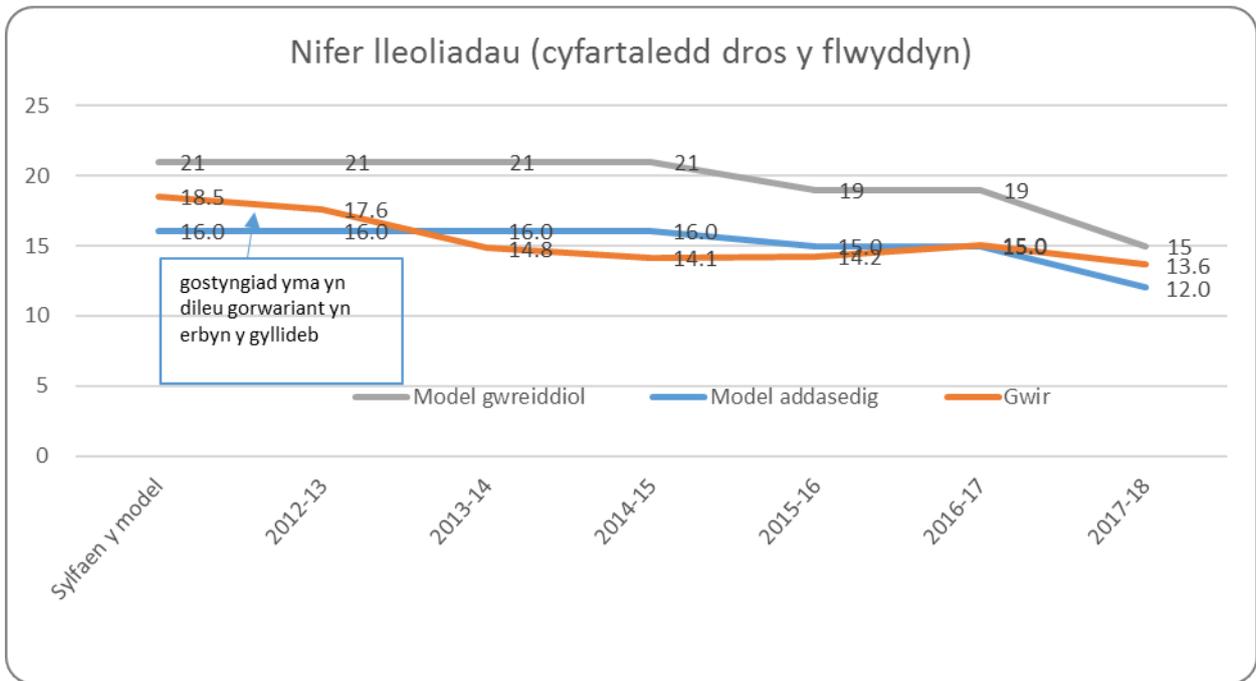
- 5.9 The Department also reported increasing pressure on workers to attend court cases because of the increase in the number of children that are subject to legal proceedings. This affects the ability to hold conferences and child reviews promptly. The Department is attempting to ensure consistency with workers; consequently 11 cases were rescheduled because of workers having to attend Court cases. This is a matter that has been raised regionally and which the Child Protection Board is looking into.
- 5.10 The **percentage of child protection reviews held within the statutory timetable during the year stands at 93%**. This is a good performance in my opinion. But, I must highlight the lack of commitment on behalf of our key partners. It appears as though the economic climate means that agencies are finding it difficult to attend key meetings within the safeguarding system. This is a matter that has previously been raised here and has been escalated by the Departmental Head to the Regional Safeguarding Board.
- 5.11 Improving the experience of children and families that go through the Safeguarding procedure is something that the Department is looking into. Less emphasis is placed on the timetable set and more on the quality of the contact the children and young people have with our officers. This is something that the inspectorate recently highlighted. Our Independent Review Officers are looking at the way they work and the way we can improve and develop practice. I will be receiving an update in our next performance meeting.
- 5.12 The **SCC24 measure: Percentage of looked after children during the year who have a Personal Education Plan within 20 school days of being admitted to care or joining a new school during the year ending 31 March** has received a great deal of attention from the Department jointly with the Education Department. Meetings have been held with the Education Department and the Education Plan Document has been reviewed and revised. A high percentage have now been completed (not reflected against the Quarter 2 measure). An extended period of monitoring the success of the tool-kit is needed, but early findings show that it is better at identifying the needs of the children, it includes the opinion and input of the children, and workers report that the quality of the tool-kit is better. I will monitor the situation with the Department.
- 5.13 At the end of September 2018, 242 children were being looked after by the Council. This is an increase of 7% on the number that were looked after at the end of September 2017. At the end of September, 64% of children were looked after at fostering placements. 155 children were placed with foster carers, of whom 31% were kinship placements or placements with friends. 26% of looked after children had been placed with their parents. There continues to be an increase in the number of children placed with their parents.
- 5.14 As you can see, the service is facing a difficult and challenging time in light of the increased demand for services and the financial pressure this entails. You will, therefore, be aware that the Head of Department has requested a service transformation resource in order to carry out a full and thorough review of all duties and associated tasks across the service. This is to gain certainty that the service, as a whole, is operating as efficiently as possible, for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd and that it implements any required changes to this end. I look forward to providing updates on this specific work programme.

6. FINANCIAL/SAVINGS SITUATION

- 6.1 As you are aware, a report was submitted to the Cabinet entitled "Improving Benefits by Transforming Children Services" in January 2014. This report anticipated that as much as £3m could be saved by reducing the number of looked-after children and reviewing the residential provision.
- 6.2 The 'End to End' review, which is a £2.04 million savings scheme in total (£250,280 for 2018/19), has been the subject of a joint review between the Children and Supporting Families Department, Finance and the Research and Information Manager, in which the predictions of the original model were revisited. This was because it appeared as though financial savings from the Scheme had been too ambitious in light of the changes to the situation in the field of Children. The profile of the population of looked-after children has changed, the average cost of residential placements has increased, along with the complexity and profundity of cases. The increase was not considered in the profile and the complexity of the cases within the original projections and, therefore, was not considered in the increase in cost per unit either.

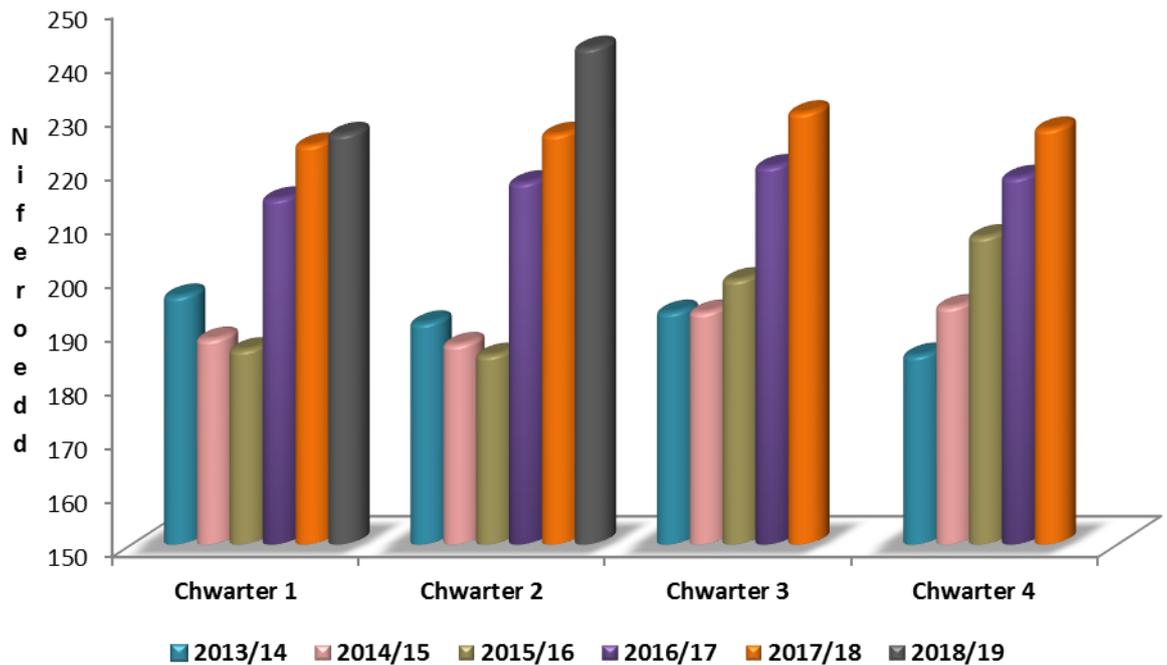


- 6.3 The work, that has now been completed, has confirmed that the number of nights for looked-after children fell during the period. However, the type of residential placements has changed and, therefore, affects the cost of placements. The contributions received by the Health Board have also fallen. As the graph above demonstrates, the number of Learning Disability cases (that cost approximately £100k per annum per case) has fallen from around eight to one a year. The sexual behaviour/abuse category, however, has seen an increase of about five up to eight over the year - and these cost approximately £175 - £200k a year. The reduction in the number of children in residential placements over the period almost all relate to the reduction in Learning Disabilities placement, often coinciding with the age of the individuals.



6.4 In light of the fact that there are very few Learning Disability cases left to generate any more savings from this element - the question is raised as to which categories could lend themselves to further savings. Because of changing needs and more cases relating to complex behavioural needs, fewer placements qualify for contributions by the Health Board (CC - Continuing Care). In response to this, the Department is seeking a detailed analysis of costs for residential placement providers, in order to secure fairer contributions for the future.

Plant mewn gofal ar ddiwedd chwarter



6.5 Based on the review at the end of August 2018, after receiving an additional Welsh Government grant, a substantial overspend by the Department of £1.3 million is anticipated. A recent increase in the number of looked-after children recently means that a further overspend is expected by the end of the financial year.

6.6 As regards the budget level for Gwynedd compared with the child care budget for 'family' councils, we in Gwynedd equal the family average; and the Councils of Ceredigion, Anglesey, Monmouthshire and Powys spend more on child care. However, in response to the concern the Department and I share about the substantial overspending, several work within the department are underway to respond to the situation. I would like to take this opportunity to outline some of these for you.

6.7 **Residential Placements Regional Project**

The lack of available residential placements and the increased costs associated with them is a matter receiving national and regional attention. The matter was recently the subject of a 'Welsh Government Parliamentary Accounts Committee'. On a regional level, under the leadership of the North Wales Heads of Children's Departments, work is taking place on a regional feasibility assessment to run a residential placement jointly, or to look at options with current providers for children and young people in north Wales. The task group is expected to report back at the beginning of March. However, this will not generate a short term solution to the problem of residential placements and will not obviate the need for specialist residential placements in future.

6.8 **Improving capacity and availability of Fostering**

On a national level, again, the lack of fostering placements is being acknowledged. The Ministerial Advisory Group on Outcomes for Children published its Action Framework for 2017-2020 that aims to:

- o Reduce the number of looked-after children
- o Improve care experiences and outcomes
- o Provide better support for young people leaving care
- o Tackle the crisis in care

As part of the National Fostering Framework, a detailed work programme is in place to try to deal with the matter. The regional project manager leads on the work of analysing the needs of local authorities, care pathways, the profile of the care cohort, the outcomes of court proceedings and placements, the levels of placement breakdowns in North Wales. On a local level, work is ongoing to improve the marketing work to attract foster carers, improve recruitment and the profile of Gwynedd as a fostering agent. As corporate parents, we need to be cognisant of this challenge and support this work wherever we can.

6.9 **Regional Transformation Plan for Children's Services**

The Cabinet will be aware of the Welsh Government 'Healthier Wales' Scheme. In response to this scheme, the region has put forward a bid for transformational funds for four specific fields, of which the field of Children is one. The transformation bid in the children's field attempts to tackle the issues on a national level; namely, increasing the number of children and young people with complex needs who enter the care system, and it attempts to ensure that a range of specific responses are developed. The transformation bid emphasises the need to develop more integrated services that would be available on a more local level. These would focus on offering early assistance, building on the edge of care provision and would offer more intensive support via the assessment and assistance teams.

6.10 This bid is yet to be approved, if successful, it will certainly help drive our vision forward. I will update you in due course.

6.11 **Safeguarding Children Effectively Model Project**

The Department has been successful in attracting a regional grant to move forward with the pioneering scheme of 'Safeguarding Children Effectively'. The plan attempts to respond to the practice needs of workers in the challenging field of child protection. In brief, it has been developed in order to prevent abuse as effectively as possible, thus leading to timely decisions in which safeguarding services can take a step back. The aim is to collaborate with the University in order to review and appraise the plan and, if successful, extend it across the region as a model of good practice. A manager has been appointed to lead on the work. This work stream should strengthen the quality and timeliness of decisions.

6.12 **Review of the Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS)**

You will be aware that we have a statutory requirement to establish an IFSS service that offers intensive intervention for families facing difficulties with substance misuse and domestic violence. The service is currently run jointly with Anglesey County Council. Following a full appraisal of the service, the Department believes that providing the service within our operational and edge of care teams would generate better results for families. The new service is being shaped by the Department, whilst the original principles and purpose are being maintained. We will monitor the situation with the Department in order to ensure better results and a more financially efficient Service.

6.13 As is evident from this report, the Supporting Children and Families Department is facing several challenges, increase in demand, increase in complex needs and the financial challenge. As the performance measures indicate, practice is good and the department is committed to respond to the challenges ahead. I trust that the above overview gives you some certainty.

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 observations in relation to propriety.

ii. **Head of Finance Department:**

In line with the trend in several local authorities, the overspend in the Children and Supporting Families Department has deepened during 2018/19. This overspend occurs across several budgets, but 'out-of-county placements' is the field which is overspending the most. Finance officers have assisted the Children Department to hold a detailed review of the expenditure on 'out-of-county placements', including comparing Gwynedd with the situation of similar local authorities. This year, fortunately, a grant of £552k has been received from Welsh Government, which

helps to alleviate some of the overspend, but the Children Department will have to look at definite steps to manage expenditure in 2019/20.

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