

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date:	22 November 2022
Title of Item:	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Elin Walker-Jones
Contact Officer:	Marian Parry Hughes, Head of Children and Supporting Families Service.

THE DECISION SOUGHT

To accept and note the information in the report.

THE REASON WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

In order to ensure effective performance management

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on developments in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families. This includes outlining the latest developments to date in 2022-23 against the pledges within the 2018-2023 Gwynedd Council Plan; issues and the progress of performance measures; and the latest on the savings and efficiency schemes.
- 1.2 I look forward to working with the department and members of the Scrutiny Committee during the coming year, to ensure that we do the best we can to put the people of Gwynedd at the heart of our children's and family support services.
- 1.3 The priority projects featured in the Council Plan are progressing. Recent staff deployment, as part of the Council's Response to the War in Ukraine, has impacted upon our ability to deliver our priority project, "Keeping Families Together", but we are now confidently achieving our pledges. We have also re-focused our efforts via the "Supporting People's Wellbeing" project to concentrate our efforts on alleviating the immediate and pressing impact of the cost of living crisis on our residents.

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2 GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN PROJECTS 2018-2023

2.1 Below, I outline the progress that has been made to date against the Department's priority projects. These priorities address the department's main risks. In general, I feel that every project is currently moving in the right direction against the pledges that we have made in the Council Plan.

2.2 Keeping Families Together Strategy

I am pleased to note that the RIF submitted grant applications to develop our Keeping Families Together Strategy have been successful in recent weeks. We are now able to move forward with the Effective Child Protection Programme, the work of the Emrallt Team, and integrate the Multi Disciplinary Team into our local arrangements. We have recruited to new post in our Family Hub and Referrals Team. This has allowed us to meet the increase in families contacting us for help, with timely response and avoid situations where families must wait for access to our provision.

2.3 Securing a local, appropriate specialist provision for children with complex needs

We have been working with Anglesey Council and the Health Board to develop the model of a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) to support children with severe and complex needs. Based on an evaluation of the model we have now reached agreement on moving the Team from a sub-regional model to a model that will be integrated into our local arrangements within the Keeping Families Together Strategy. We have started to recruit new and vacant posts to ensure that the MDT model responds to local needs. To ensure sufficient and suitable placements, to meet the needs of our children, we are also continuing to attract more foster carers via the Maethu Cymru campaign, and we have also started working on a project to establish Small Group Homes.

2.4 Ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive

We submitted the Autism Plan to the cabinet in December 2021. We have appointed a Project Co-ordinator for the plan and delivered Autism Awareness Training to over 150 front line staff. Local events are being delivered in Gwynedd by the Regional Service to support families. We will be recruiting two new posts with then Children and Adults' Services in the next stage of the project.

2.5 Supporting People's Well-being

Work is continuing on some of the workstreams, such as tackling homelessness through our Housing Action Plan and supporting unpaid carers through the Carers Support Group. The project has concentrated its efforts recently on the Cost of Living workstream since the last report I presented. We have appointed to two new posts to bring partners together to maximise our efforts to tackle the challenges of the rising cost of living, fuel poverty, food poverty and access to financial advice. Our work to respond to the cost of living crisis has included creating a dedicated section of advice and information on our website; establishing a network of locations that offer a "Warm Welcome" to residents over the winter; establishing and allocating an emergency food grant; and organising a series of "Help with your Bills" drop-in events in communities.

Work is continuing on the development of a Community Resilience Framework. We have collaborated with new partners in order to extend the network of Supporting People Hubs in the county. The network of 11 hubs ensures that local, informal access to support services is available to residents to help them with a wide variety of needs.

3. PERFORMANCE AND MEASURES

- 3.1 I wish to draw your attention to the following matters, which are unrelated to the Priority Projects, but that are being addressed by the department because they are affecting the performance of services and/or causing us concern.
- 3.2 Workforce Capacity – The workforce situation remains a matter of serious concern, but recent work with the support of an independent consultant and our targeted recruitment campaigns, means that steps are underway to address this challenge. It is too early for us to see that work bearing fruit, so for now the workforce capacity remains a concern.
- 3.3 The department continues to see that the nature of the cases being supported demonstrates that children's needs are complex, intensifying, that they require a very comprehensive and specialist package of support and packages of care. Our priority projects and the sustainability and stability of our day-to-day services will be key to our ability to respond to this.
- 3.4 In terms of the department's measures, I am generally happy with their performance. I wish to draw your attention to one in particular, which illustrate the department's story during the period in question in this report.
- 3.5 We continue to see an increase in the numbers of people contacting the Department for Information, Advice or Assistance. We received 1881 contact by families in April – June, and 1680 between July - September. We believe that this demand is driven by the effects of COVID and subsequent social and economic impacts, along with the ongoing cost of living crisis, putting unmanageable stresses on families.

4 FINANCIAL POSITION / SAVINGS

- 4.1 It was reported to the Cabinet on 25 October 2022, that the Children and Supporting Families Department is expected to overspend by £88k during the 2022/23 financial year.
- 4.2 The Cabinet, 18 January 2022, has removed the savings target of £279,750 from the End to End Project for 2022/23.
- 4.3 For 2022/23, as part of the bidding process the Department has received over £ 1,031,500 worth of bids (£581,500 permanent bids and £450,000 one-off bids) to meet unavoidable pressures mainly on children's placements in care and to support the delivery of the Autism and Supporting People's Well-being priority projects.

5 Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. The Monitoring Officer:

"No observations to add from a propriety perspective"

ii. Head of Finance:

"I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Children and Supporting Families Department during the relevant period."

a. Views of the Local Member:

i. Not a local matter.

b. Results of Any Consultation:

i. None to note.

Appendices