

Performance Report

Gwynedd Council 2015/16



www.gwynedd.gov.wales/performance

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The Council Leader's Foreword



Dyfed Edwards, **Council Leader**

The purpose of this annual report is to provide a clear and balanced summary of the performance of Gwynedd Council for the year 2015/16. It is, therefore, good to be able to say that the Council's performance has remained strong over the past year, despite the current financial circumstances.

We have continued to improve our arrangements to place the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do as we as a Council seek to show guidance but also as we work in partnership with our communities. One example of this is the way we have included the people of Gwynedd via 'The Gwynedd Challenge' before making the necessary decisions to cut £4.9million from the budgets of our services. The result of this work was that we agreed with a very high percentage of the choices made by the people of Gwynedd when seeking to set our budget this year.

Our work to improve and ensure consistency in the quality of education in Gwynedd continues with a strong performance and 89% leaving school with five GCSEs A*-C. However, there is always room for improvement, particularly in subjects such as Mathematics and English. Work to ensure we have viable schools and suitable leadership is developing, and the opening of Ysgol Bro Llifon during the year has meant a better environment for learning and playing for children day in day out.

We have continued to collaborate with our partners such as the Health Boards in order to respond to the challenges which we face in the future in the field of care and health and as we trial a new way of working in the Eifionydd area. We have also worked closely with our partners in order to provide our early intervention and preventative services for children and their families, with 88% of families who received a service from the Gyda'n Gilydd Team stating that they have seen progress or an improvement in their lives.

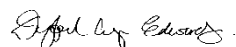
As well as providing services for the short term, we are anxious to plan for the long term also. Ensuring investment in our rural communities is crucial to creating socio-economic prosperity. We are, therefore, very pleased to see an investment of £1.5million in Llanbedr which is part of the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone. Creating a Centre of Excellence on the site will be a way of securing approximately 200 new jobs in this area.

Following the introduction of successful arrangements for residual waste collections (green bin) in the Dwyfor area in 2014/15, we have extended these arrangements to the Meirionnydd and Arfon areas in the past year. We have set a good foundation for the future by reaching the national target of 58% of waste being reused, recycled or composted.

It is also encouraging to note that Gwynedd has been leading the way nationally with the Language Charter project and the efforts to increase the social use of the Welsh language by primary school children. The success of the work in Gwynedd has meant that the scheme will now be extended throughout Wales. We are also taking steps to extend this important work to the secondary sector.

The Auditor General has given us a very positive message this year also, by saying that the Council has continued to improve in its priority fields and that we have robust financial management arrangements, with some weaknesses in our scrutiny arrangements. We are currently discussing changes in order to strengthen our scrutiny arrangements for the future.

The Council Plan for 2016/17 shows that we continue to have an ambition for our County and that we are determined to try to make a difference to the lives of the residents of Gwynedd. Our aim is to continue to address future challenges and opportunities in order to ensure the best for the people of Gwynedd today and tomorrow, and we look forward to working with the residents of Gwynedd and other partners in this coming period.



Dyfed Edwards, **Council Leader**

Our Expenditure

This is how much our departments spent on services for people in Gwynedd in 2015/16:



Citizen Panel's Opinion

701 local people that are members of the Gwynedd Citizens' Panel were asked to give a mark out of ten on the following three questions:

1. Generally how do you feel about **the area that you live in** as a place to live?



91%

(mark between 6 & 10)



4%

(mark of 5)



4%

(mark between 1 & 4)

2. To what degree do you feel that **Gwynedd Council** meets your needs?



83%

(mark between 6 & 10)



11%

(mark of 5)



6%

(mark between 1 & 4)

3. Do you feel that you are given sufficient opportunity to influence the **Gwynedd Council** services that you use?



69%

(mark between 6 & 10)



12%

(mark of 5)



18%

(mark between 1 & 4)

What would raise your mark to 10?

This question was asked to respondents that gave a mark of less than 10. The comments received will be used by the Council to plan for the future.

Local people who agree to become members of the Gwynedd Citizens Panel have the opportunity to have their say on local services. If you would like to become a member of the panel, you can register by visiting www.gwynedd.gov.wales/CitizensPanel or by phoning 01766 771000.

Gwynedd Challenge



We enquired...


Local people were invited to have their say on the 118 possible options for cutting services to make financial savings to close the huge financial deficit that's facing the Council because of a cut in the grant by the Government.

What you did...

We received **2,142** questionnaires by  **2064**  **78**

In addition, **615** of you attended one of **32** drop-in sessions or public forums.

We listened, responded and implemented...

 Following the process of asking and listening, local councillors decided to approve **49** cuts to services. **41** of the **49** cuts that were approved matched your opinion.

You said... that you wanted the Council to make every effort to work more efficiently in order to limit the need for cuts.

What we did ... Undertake a detailed review of all Council services in order to realise £6.4million of efficiency savings, with an additional £9million to follow.



You said... that it was important that the Council protects the business sector and tourism, the library service, the arts and culture, community regeneration and youth organisations and clubs.

What we did...

1. Omitted four proposals that would have a major effect on these important local sectors from the list of cuts to be implemented.
2. Decided not to introduce any further cuts to the library service.
3. Omitted the proposal to abolish the Council Community Regeneration Service from the list of cuts to be implemented.
4. Decided to realise savings by re-profiling the Youth Service rather than cutting it.

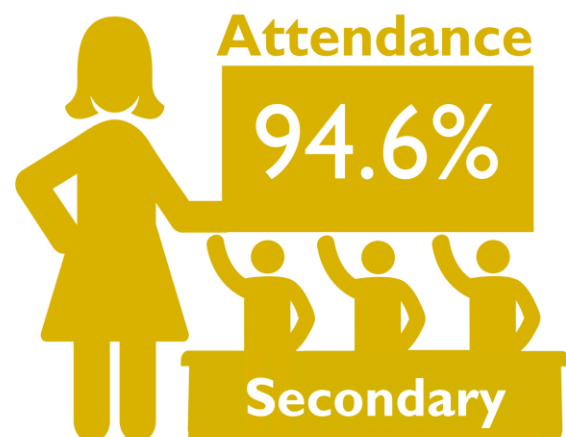
Children and Young People

Setting the foundations to ensure that the children and young people of Gwynedd have the same opportunities and receive the same good quality of education has remained a priority during 2015/16. We continue with the commitment of improving and ensuring consistency in the quality of the education we offer to all the children and young people of the county wherever they may live.

The foundations of our Education Quality Strategy, and the robust arrangements which have been put in place between the Council and the North Wales Regional Schools Efficiency and Improvement Service (GwE) have started to come to fruition in recent years and this has been reflected in examination results during the year. Gwynedd's performance measures are generally good across the Key Stages (KS). The performance is very good in KS3 (11-14 years old) with 91.3% of young people attaining the expected levels in English or Welsh, Mathematics and Science. Our performance remains strong by the end of KS4 with nearly every pupil leaving school with an accreditation at the end of KS4 (14-16 years old), and 89% leaving school with 5 GCSEs A*-C, and 98% leaving school with 5 GCSEs D-G, which means that Gwynedd is ahead nationally. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement, with more work to standardise across schools and subjects. The biggest challenge we face is improving the performance in Mathematics and English.



Attendance rates in secondary schools have increased again, with 94.6% ranking Gwynedd joint-second highest in Wales. On the other hand, the figure for primary pupil attendance dropped to 95%. The Council is focusing on targeting specific schools in order to improve attendance. In addition, the figures for permanent exclusions in primary schools have been a cause for concern this year. For the first time, pupils from some of the schools have been permanently excluded. We intend to address this during the coming year by commencing the provision of specialist units within schools to support the pupils with the most complex behavioural and emotional needs.



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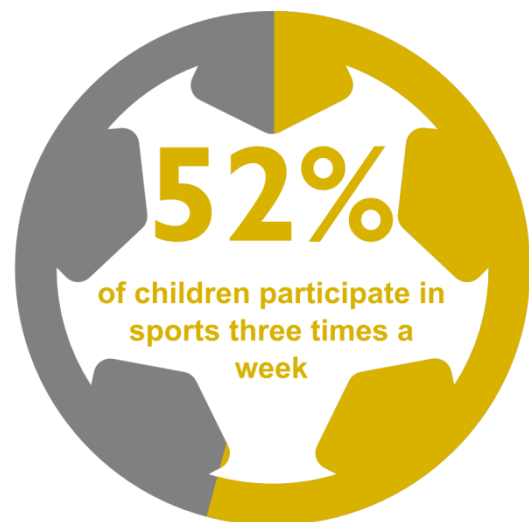
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Particular attention has been given to improving the quality of leadership within the education system in order to raise standards during the year. The support and training package for leaders and managers is developing well, with a baseline set in terms of expectations for the year and beyond. Thus far, 27 prospective leaders from Gwynedd have attended training, and nine prospective heads have been successful in gaining the national professional qualification for headships during the year, with 100% of applicants qualifying. Six prospective heads have been accepted on the programme for next year.

We are also progressing well with introducing our viable schools network programme. In September 2015, Ysgol Bro Llifon opened. This development has led to a better environment for the children to work together and play with their peers, and has ensured robust leadership and management. Good progress has been made with the other sites also, with the Hafod Lon site the next to open during the autumn term 2016. Work is in the pipeline in the Gader, Glancegin and Berwyn catchment areas, with an investment of £56million in the viable schools programme.



We are in the process of transforming the provision for approximately 4,000 pupils with Additional Learning Needs in Gwynedd. In light of legislative changes expected from Welsh Government, and following a period of consultation, a work plan and programme of improvements have been confirmed for the new service. A series of training programmes were held during the year through e-learning programmes for additional learning needs coordinators at every school which focused on planning around the needs of children and young people and placing them at the centre. Further work will be carried out over the coming year on measuring the impact of the new service from the outset.



In addition, during the year we have managed to improve the physical activity levels of children and young people. In the schools, the level of children who love sport has increased. Gwynedd results show that 52% of children take part in sport three times a week. This is a significant increase from the 43% in 2013, with the use of leisure centres among the best in Wales, despite a reduction in the Free Swimming Grant from the Government. The challenge for the coming year will be to maintain and improve on these results.

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This year, we have been preparing for the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 which has been in force since April 2016. The act focuses on the need to develop a preventative attitude towards everything we do. Promoting children's well-being by investing in preventative and early intervention work is core to the Council's vision. In order to arrange our early intervention and preventative services around specific issues which face Gwynedd, we have undertaken an assessment of the needs of families. This work allows us to identify gaps and specific needs and improve the provision being offered to the young person.

Though work will be undertaken over the coming year to confirm and prioritise the preventative services for the future, the Council has provided a package of early intervention and preventative programmes through the Families First grant funding, as well as core Council funding. The early intervention service provided includes parenting programmes, early years, together with work with families and children who are at risk of being taken into care. Gyda'n Gilydd is one of those programmes.

88% of the families whose cases have been closed following receiving a service from the Gyda'n Gilydd Team during the year report progress after receiving a service. The average percentage of progress seen by families has come to 25.8%. This is a reduction on last year because the number of complex cases has increased.



88%
of families that have received a Gyda'n Gilydd Team service that have seen progress or an improvement in their lives

There is some risk regarding this element of the service as there is no guarantee that the grant which funds the work will continue post-April 2017, and therefore, during the coming year, there will be a need to focus on how we can maintain the service for the future.

The Edge of Care Team was established during the year, which is an exciting and important development which will transform experiences for children and families. The purpose of the team is to work intensively with vulnerable children and families, and children who are about to be taken into care. The team has received 73 referrals during the year and has managed to avoid care costs of almost £300,000 in its first year. The development is seen as good practice and during the year, the service was invited to present the team's work in a national conference that introduced new developments in the field of looked after children.

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Safeguarding

The responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is one of the Council's most important responsibilities. Over recent years, emphasis has been placed on ensuring that the arrangements in this field are robust and that we realise our personal responsibilities for safeguarding.

Regional statutory arrangements are in place for this field. These arrangements ensure that there is an overview of the challenges across the agencies and, by means of the Regional Board, reviews are commissioned following unfavourable incidents. The recommendations deriving from these reviews are disseminated across the region and more extensively when and if relevant. One of the main aims of this system is to learn lessons following incidents, and ensure that any shortcomings in practices or processes are addressed.

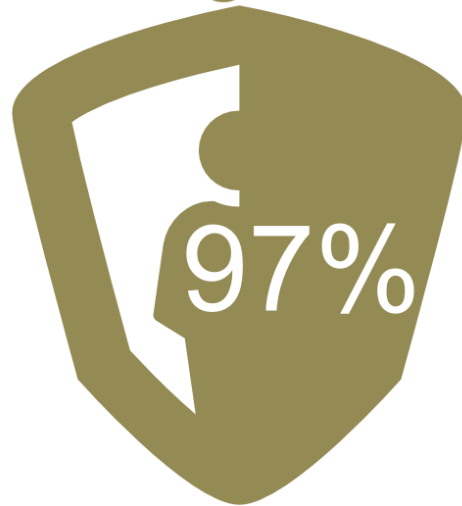
100% of all staff working directly with children, young people and vulnerable adults with a current disclosure check

Disclosure & Barring Service

Our measures in relation to adults and children suggest a solid performance again in 2015/16. Of all the adults safeguarding referrals completed during the year, it is evident that we managed to control the risk 97% of the time.

Manage Risk



We did not manage to control the risk 100% of the time as in 2014/15 as the remaining 3% had refused intervention or had withdrawn the application. The performance of this measure is consistent with the rest of Wales (97% in 2015/16), and the family (97% in 2015/16) of councils that are similar to Gwynedd. Specifically regarding children, the rate of risk assessments submitted to case conferences that were considered ones that showed quality when making decisions suggests robust performance again this year - 97% in 2015/16 compared with 98% in 2014/15.

The Strategic Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Panel is now in place to ensure awareness and improve ownership across the Council of this important field, and also monitor the implementation of some of the transformational projects in the field. Over the course of the year, the Panel has agreed to add the "PREVENT" agenda to its remit. This is the Home Office-led programme that relates to attempting to prevent individuals from being radicalised.

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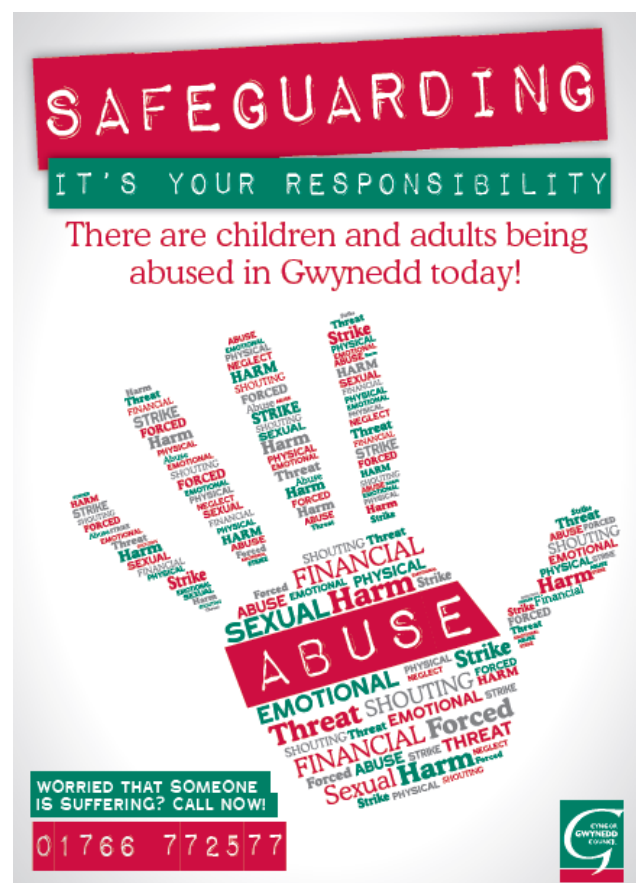
Financial

Efforts are continuing in terms of improving awareness of safeguarding across the Council, but, as with many projects, it is likely that the element of measuring the impact of our intervention is the most challenging. In order to seek to respond to this, a Task Group has been established to create a system to measure the impact of adopting and complying with policy, the work of raising awareness and the impact of the training on safeguarding. This will be a priority for 2016/17.

There have been examples during the year of action by front-line staff, as a result of an improved understanding of safeguarding, who have identified safeguarding issues and taken action by making a referral. An Awareness Audit was held during the year and the results show an increase in staff awareness levels across the Council in terms of safeguarding issues.

During the last year we as a Council have come to understand, as much as possible, the demand for service and the trends of Child Sexual Exploitation in Gwynedd. A crucial part of this is implementing the regional work programme while considering the corporate implications which derive from it. Awareness-raising and forming a local work programme to respond to and ensure compliance with the expectations will be a priority for the next year. Again in the children field, much work has been done over the course of the past year in order to strengthen safeguarding procedures and culture within education. A clear work programme is being implemented in order to ensure that Gwynedd schools are entirely clear about their responsibilities in the field. A Safeguarding Officer was appointed to the Education Department in September in order to drive forward the work programme and considerable attention has been given to reviewing and adopting policies, training staff and agreeing on a county-wide strategy.

During the year an attempt was also made to continually improve the safeguarding arrangements and culture within the field of adults. Although a number of the recommendations associated with the work programmes have been implemented, more work is yet to be done in order to have a clear reporting procedure which ensures a complete overview of the work. During the year, recommendations were received from the Care Inspectorate that we need to improve our internal arrangements in terms of the implementation of safeguarding in the adults field specifically in order to respond to new requirements. In response to this, and as a result of legislative changes, the Adults, Health and Well-being Department has fully reviewed its operational arrangements and is considering the way forward.



Although it is early days to start seeing the direct effect of this field's project work on the people of Gwynedd, we're confident that it will bring positive results in future.

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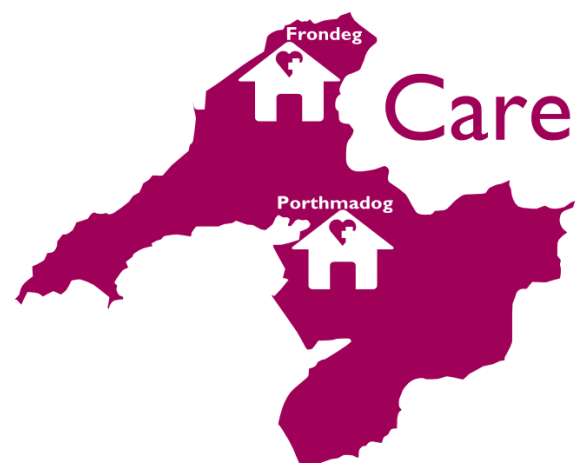
Care

The field of adult care has been preparing its structures during the year for legislative changes, as well as changes in professional practice. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 came into force in April 2016.

Although challenging in terms of a shift in culture and work structure, it has been an exciting period in which we have trialled a new way of working which attempts to offer services of the best quality by responding to people's priorities more effectively. Working in an integrated manner with the Health Board and our partners offers opportunities to transform our services for the better, and ensure that adults are given the support of one designated worker to co-ordinate the care. It also means bringing in expertise where necessary. Currently, the new arrangements are only operational in the Eifonydd area and it will be a priority to develop the new way of working across the county over the coming year. The emphasis has been on placing the individual at the centre of our services and this is seen in terms of the new purpose which has been set, namely - 'Helping me to live my life how I want to'.

In order to achieve this it is essential that the individual's natural contacts are used and that we promote their well-being. A key part of ensuring that this support is available in our communities is the need to improve the understanding of the people of Gwynedd of the way communities can support people to live there longer. Though some success has been seen in terms of the engagement programme for staff and elected members, further work needs to be done in terms of starting to go out to discuss with communities. This will be a priority for the coming year.

In order to help individuals to live their lives as they want to, it is crucial that we can offer the varied accommodation options across the county which address the needs of our residents. An Older People Accommodation Strategy was adopted during the year and it will be used to discuss developments and options with developers in the future. The benefits arising from the project are yet to be seen in full, but implementing it will contribute to ensuring that we have the suitable provision in the appropriate places for older people in the county. As part of this, work has commenced on building the Extra Care Housing development in Porthmadog and also the decision to develop a new accommodation model for adults with learning disabilities on the Frondeg site in Caernarfon.



During the past year, one of the main matters that have been a cause for concern is the stability and sustainability of our nursing homes across the county. A number of homes found themselves in a difficult situation and this highlights the fragile nature of the sector. The rate of delayed transfers from hospitals for social care reasons has deteriorated also with an increase from 1.05% in 2014/15 to 2.38% in 2015/16.

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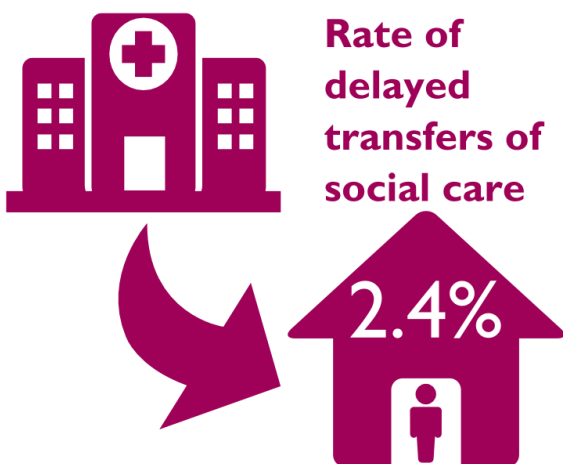
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Despite this, compared with the whole of Wales, Gwynedd's performance remains good, but we must acknowledge that a deterioration has occurred.

The recommendations of the scrutiny members as part of their investigation 'From Hospital to the Home' has supported the service with planning and collaborating with its partners to overcome barriers in this field.

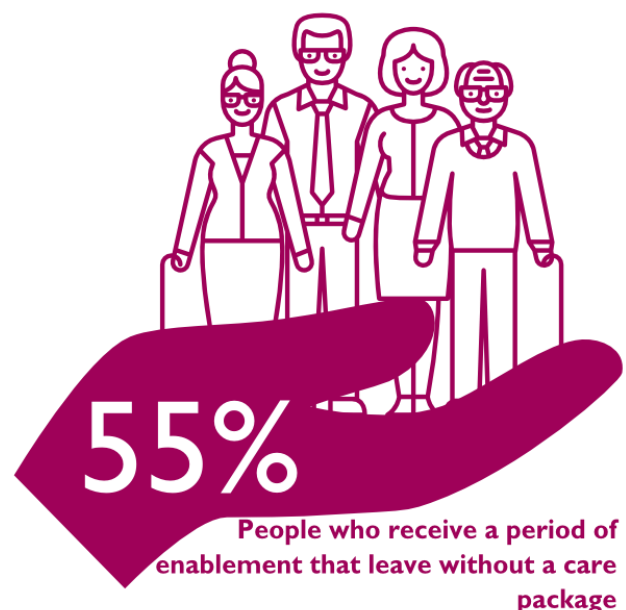


This performance reflects the general issues of the health and care system in terms of the high demand on hospitals, lack of nursing beds in the community and also a lack of capacity in terms of professional workers and home carers in some specific areas of Gwynedd. Consequently, the rate of 'reviews of care plans' shows a decline from 85% in 2013/14 to 79% by 2015/16. Upon analysing this figure further per area, it is seen that the performance of Meirionnydd is much lower than other parts of Gwynedd. This decline again highlights the obvious lack of capacity in some areas and consequently the prioritisation that has had to happen.

It is also a difficult and challenging period in terms of service provision costs. The financial situation places pressure across the sector and alongside our partners we are seeking a proactive response to the challenges that are, and will be facing us in the future.

In response to this emergency, in March 2016 the Full Council commissioned a new project - 'Capacity and sustainability of the Care and Health System'. The purpose of the project is to seek to respond to the current problems in relation to care and health provisions within the older people field specifically. By implementing the project, jointly with the Health Board, we are attempting to ensure that we will have the most suitable system in place across the care and health field in future, and particularly in order to respond to specific challenges in Meirionnydd.

On the whole, the performance measures suggest that the service is on the right track. There seems to be a reduction in the proportion of people who choose to receive traditional support in the community and also in our residential homes. This suggests that we are less reliant on traditional care compared with previous years. To support this, there has also been a gradual increase in the use of direct payments which of course promotes and empowers individuals to live their lives as they wish to live them. Feedback from some of our service users has proven that our new approach is a very positive one.



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Poverty, Deprivation, Economy and Housing

The challenge facing the Gwynedd economy is significant. The structure of the economy remains narrow, with the work opportunities still over-reliant on the public sector. Issues such as low salaries and the need to ensure appropriate connectivity and a workforce with the relevant skills are key things on which we need to focus.

As the role of the private sector is not strong in a rural area such as Gwynedd, the Council has been proactive, in partnership with the Welsh Government and other partners in attracting investment to the area. Work to attract investments to sites at Trawsfynydd and Llanbedr has maintained momentum over the year, and has a clear focus on attracting a small reactor to Trawsfynydd, and developing an aerospace centre at Llanbedr. There is a programme to develop the Llanbedr airfield site as a centre of British and international importance, and the Council is working with Welsh Government on the facilitation and development of the site as a commercial spaceport by the private sector. Substantial lobbying work has also been undertaken to attract public funding to improve access to these sites and to develop the relevant infrastructure.

During the year, we were successful in attracting £1.5million of investment to create a centre of excellence for unmanned aeroplanes. Work of developing these sites will continue during the coming years. It is too early to see the effect of these investments on the residents and businesses of Gwynedd, but the work is setting firm foundations which will attract transformational investments to the area over the next five years, with the potential of creating approximately 200 jobs.

We are continuing to develop a high-value jobs scheme by securing support to attract and develop businesses within sectors which offer high value, namely jobs with a salary of over a third more than the county average. We have worked closely with Welsh Government to sell the potential of Gwynedd to private developers in these sectors, and consequently we have succeeded in creating 35 high-value jobs particularly in the digital sector.

We also continue to attract nationally or internationally high-profile events to Gwynedd in order to take advantage of the economic and social benefit which will ensue. During the year, an investment of £5.9million was made in the economy as a result of these events.



There has been considerable progress during the year with the provision of broadband infrastructure across the county. The Superfast Wales Programme is 83% complete in Gwynedd and 51,839 homes and businesses can now receive superfast broadband. Gwynedd has led the way in Wales via two pilot programmes to develop the way of supporting businesses to make better use of technology to trade. During the year, sessions were trialled with 50 businesses in Gwynedd and over 7,000 businesses have received information about the assistance available to them. During the coming year we will focus on collaborating with the Welsh Government to ensure that the national scheme to support businesses will continue to meet the needs of businesses in Gwynedd.

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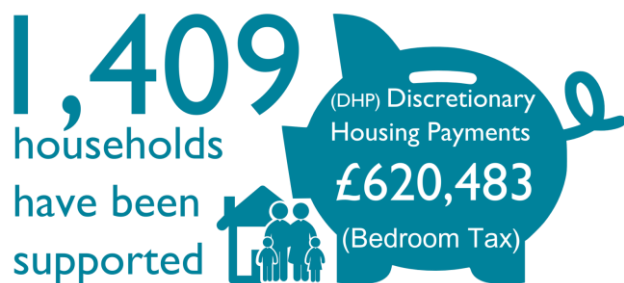
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We have also created a Tackling Poverty Strategy during the year, which focuses on two main spatial poverty priorities namely those communities which suffer mostly in terms of poverty, and population poverty, namely some groups of the population e.g. single-parent households on a low income. We will concentrate on implementing the strategy and on developing specific interventions to target these specific groups during the coming year.

Digital literacy sessions and information technology assistance sessions were arranged for library users across the county.

In addition, a budget of £620,483 was received from Welsh Government in order to make Discretionary Housing Payments during the year, and a Discretionary Housing Policy was created as a result. This funding was used to support 1,409 households to alleviate the effect caused by the Government's range of welfare reforms. An improvement was also seen in the number of days taken to process new claims for Housing Benefits and Council Tax Reductions, from 20 days in 2014/15 to 16 days in 2015/16.



Reviewing our strategy to increase the supply and variety of housing in order to ensure that our housing supply is suitable for the needs of the people of Gwynedd remains a priority. During the year, the affordable housing funding model business plan was approved. It is too soon to see the effect of this work, but in future, it is expected that the work we have in mind will enable more people in Gwynedd to buy affordable houses, and will allow us to provide accommodation to homeless individuals and contribute to the county's older people accommodation needs. The service also values the contribution of the scrutiny members in developing the homelessness service. Their work was an opportunity to challenge, dispel occasional misconceptions and affirm that the service is for Gwynedd people.



The Council procures a large percentage of its goods and services from local businesses which is worth over £64million to the local economy. During the year we have developed internal arrangements which focus on arranging resources to procure goods and services (procurement) within specific fields in order to purchase in a more pioneering and efficient way. The procedure was established for the 'People' category field during the year. We have also been proactive with social benefits clauses in capital construction contracts during the year. When building Ysgol Bro Llifon, it was ensured that 55% of sub-contracts were won by contractors in Gwynedd. Consequently, weeks of work experience were offered to local students, and jobs were created by local contractors.

The Full Council has asked the Cabinet to increase its efforts to keep the benefits local during the coming year and to collaborate with and empower small local companies to compete for tenders.

Ensuring support for vulnerable individuals to go to work or training remains a priority. During the year, we succeeded in attracting £1.5million of European funding to implement a package of interventions to support vulnerable children and adults through the 11-16 TRAC project. Via this scheme, 190 young people received specialist support and relevant learning experiences. In addition, it was seen that the figures for 16-18 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEETs) was 1.8%, which corresponds to 24 young people. During the coming period, it is hoped to be able to target 480 vulnerable young people and offer them support in terms of gaining a qualification, receiving training or accessing education and implementing a package of activities which will contribute to reducing our percentage of NEET young people.

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The Welsh Language

Gwynedd has always been a stronghold of the Welsh language and culture, however we have witnessed a gradual decline in the number of Welsh-speakers. According to the 2011 Census, there has been a decline of 846 in the number of Welsh-speakers in Gwynedd, namely -3.5% compared with the 2001 Census.

Many reasons militate against the use of the Welsh language in social situations and in order to try to respond to the situation we have been working with four communities (Porthmadog, Bangor, Dolgellau and Talysarn) in order to promote the use of the Welsh language in those communities. 24 activities have been held with 866 attendees having a positive experience of using the Welsh language. Although feedback suggests that the individuals who have attended the events have had a positive experience through the medium of Welsh, time will tell if this leads to an increase in the use of the language in these communities.



At present there is inconsistency in the provision of bilingual services by public bodies in Gwynedd, which means that it is not always possible for residents to use the Welsh language naturally when communicating with public bodies. Public bodies in Gwynedd have agreed to take part in a project to set consistent and explicit standards regarding the provision of services through the medium of Welsh, however, the work has not proceeded as well as we would have wished and we will be pushing the project further during the coming year.

Over the coming year further work will need to be done to establish what the current situation is within the establishments and take joint action on schemes which will improve the experience of users by offering services naturally through the medium of Welsh without having to ask for it.

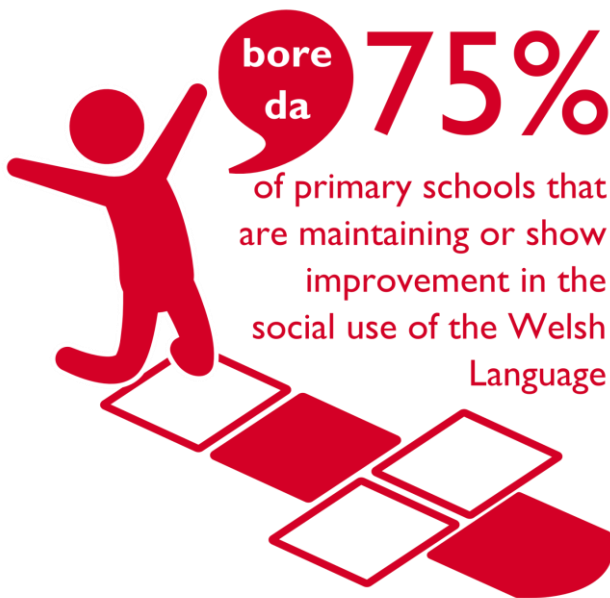
In order to address the lack of social use of the Welsh language by children and young people and establish a better understanding of the situation, we have created a picture of the current situation in respect of the use of the Welsh language by young people in Year 7 in all secondary schools in Gwynedd. In addition, a series of sessions to raise awareness and confidence among young people in terms of their social use of the Welsh language have been held in fields such as sports and music.



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Following the establishment of a baseline regarding the social use of the Welsh language in primary schools in Gwynedd as part of the Language Charter project and following the implementation programme, it is noted that 75% of primary schools show that the pupils have maintained or shown an increase in the social use of the language. Further work will need to be done over the next year to develop our ability to analyse the use of language by individual pupils.

Although Gwynedd Council is at the forefront of using the Welsh language as a living language, we need to ensure that this happens consistently across all our services. Initial work has been undertaken to assess the situation and we will use this information to close any gaps in our Welsh-language provision.



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The Environment

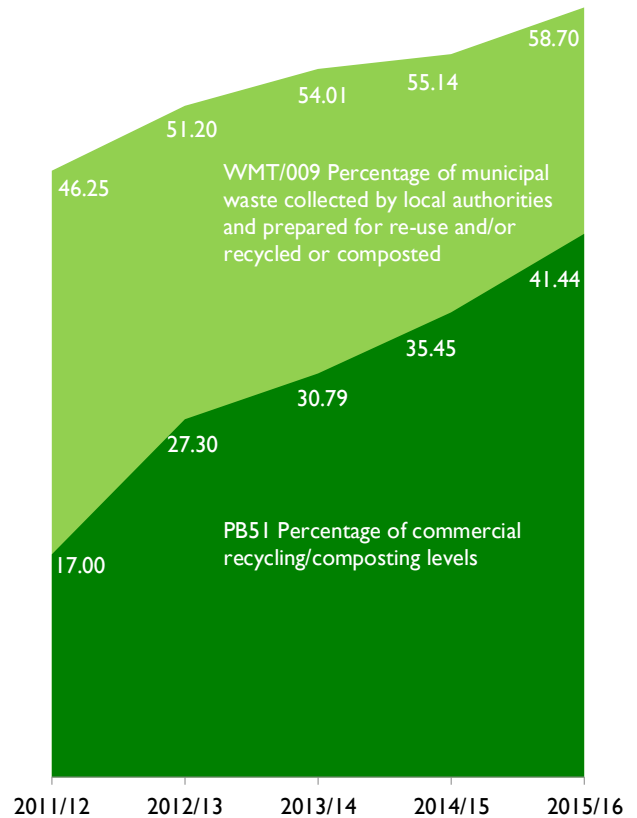
Gwynedd has a natural environment of a high standard and there are several challenges in trying to ensure that we protect that environment but at the same time ensure that we do not hinder the ability of our residents to live and prosper within the county.

For some years now, emphasis has been placed on the need to reduce our dependency on sending waste to landfill by disposing of our waste in a more environmentally-friendly way by increasing composting and recycling levels.

Following the introduction of arrangements to reduce the frequency of residual waste collections (green bin) in the Dwyfor area to every three weeks in 2014/15, we extended these arrangements to the Meirionnydd and Arfon areas in the past year. The commitment of the county's residents and businesses to reducing their over-dependence on the disposal of waste to landfill has played a crucial part in improving our performance and by now 58.70% of waste from Gwynedd homes is reused, recycled or composted. This indicates that we have met the national target of 58% and have shown an increase of over 12% since 2011/12.

Gwynedd businesses have also contributed with commercial reusing, recycling and composting rates having increased almost 6% from 35.45% at the end of 2014/15 to 41.44% in 2015/16.

Yet again, this should be compared with the 17% which happened in 2011/12.



We will continue to implement the Waste Strategy in future, with the intention of reusing, recycling or composting 64% of the waste from our households by 2020.

The cleanliness of our streets is an important issue for the people of Gwynedd and the cleanliness standards of our streets continued to improve, scoring 76.26 out of 100 compared with 71.88 in 2012/13.



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Carbon emissions in Gwynedd have a harmful effect on the local environment as well as contributing towards the climate change effects on a global level. Though the Council's contribution is only very small, it is important that we play our part by reducing our carbon emissions to an appropriate level.

By reducing the use of energy in our buildings, street lighting, upgrading lighting, installing solar panels and reducing business journeys we have succeeded to reduce our carbon footprint by 26.20% since 2005 and have succeeded in delivering accumulative financial savings of over £3.09million since starting to roll-out the scheme. This means that the people of Gwynedd benefit environmentally and financially.



Carbon



During the year, we managed to prepare the Joint Local Development Plan with Anglesey County Council which will set out the framework for planning applications in future. Although a slight slippage is noted in the timetable, we managed to send it for public examination and an Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate will consider the robustness of the plan later in the year.

Our performance in dealing with planning applications remains good, with 82.30% determined within the eight weeks compared with 76.44% last year.

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Effective and Efficient Council

Despite the financial pressures, the Council's objective is to ensure that the resources we have are used to give the biggest benefits to the people of Gwynedd.

Over the past year, work has continued to try to ensure a consistent culture across the Council of placing the people of Gwynedd at the centre by promoting the principles amongst the staff, hold reviews within service units and implement the programme to develop leaders.

Although a culture-shift in a large organisation such as the Council takes time and that it is somewhat premature to measure the effect, initial evidence from some of the reviews shows that the work has resulted in providing a better service in a more effective and efficient way.



We will continue to give attention to placing the people of Gwynedd at the centre of all our efforts in 2016/17 by changing culture, developing leaders and undertaking more reviews within service units.

As part of a project to look at the Council's performance system, service units are now consistently trying to ensure that they measure the things that are important for the people of Gwynedd.

This means that we will focus on improving the performance of these measures in future.

As part of the Engagement project which aims to improve engagement across the Council, the 'Gwynedd Challenge' consultation was undertaken. The consultation was an opportunity for the people of Gwynedd to contribute directly to the work of prioritising services which in turn influenced the cuts approved within the Council's Financial Strategy. Over 2,100 responses were received and though this could be considered a small response for such an important topic, compared with responses to similar consultations within the public sector it was very encouraging.

In addition, a new procedure was established to measure the satisfaction of Gwynedd people with the Council and its services by giving them an opportunity to note what would improve their satisfaction. All Gwynedd citizens will have an opportunity to respond to the survey and express their satisfaction in 2016/17.

Over the past year, attention has been given to improving our arrangements in order to safeguard data and information by holding training sessions and introducing new procedures. It is premature to assess the effect of the work at present, however in due course it is expected that it will lead to strengthening our arrangements further to protect sensitive information.

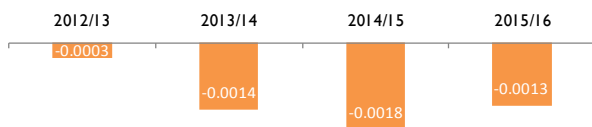
In the modern age, many people prefer to make contact with services by using technology and they are therefore able to do so at a time convenient for them. We have started a plan to facilitate access for the people of Gwynedd to Council services by using digital media as well as the more traditional ways. Again, it is early days and we would have hoped to have proceeded further with this scheme but we are confident that it will progress over the coming years.

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Financial Planning

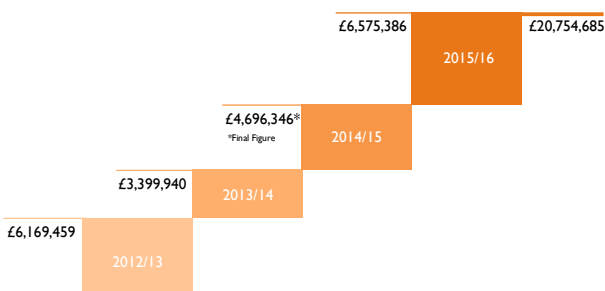
The cuts in funding that the Council receives from the Government mean that we must cope with receiving less money to maintain our services. We identified that the financial deficit over the period of four years up to 2017/18 could be as much as £50million, and consequently we have been looking at ways of ensuring that the effects of the savings on the people of Gwynedd are kept to a minimum and continue to deliver more in those priority fields.

It is therefore crucial that we keep within the budget and over the course of the last year we managed to keep within £304,000 (or -0.0013) of the budget.



One of the year's main successes is that more efficiency savings have been realised which means that we can avoid cutting services for the people of Gwynedd. We delivered efficiency savings worth £6.575million over the course of the last year by changing the way we provide services, whilst maintaining or improving the standard of the service for residents at the same time. Further work needs to be done on some schemes in order to ensure that we deliver our plan in accordance with our promises.

Financial Strategy Savings



In addition we have a programme to find and develop further efficiencies which aim to ensure as few service cuts as possible. At present, a range of efficiency schemes are being developed in order to address the target of £7.25million of further efficiencies which has been set as part of the Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2019/20.

Unfortunately, due to the reduction in grant from the Government, we unavoidably have to cut some services. In order to ensure that the people and businesses of Gwynedd have an opportunity to note what their priorities are, we undertook the 'Gwynedd Challenge' consultation and approved a series of cuts worth £4.9million which was based on the response of the public and businesses. We will be moving ahead to implement these cuts in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Another way of ensuring that austerity has the least impact on the people of Gwynedd is by attracting additional funding. As a result of agreeing to deliver a series of results with Welsh Government, and succeeding to reach or exceed the ambition during the year, we received a payment of £1.284million. This contributes to the Council's Financial Strategy.



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