



Children and Supporting Families Department



Our purpose is to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm; experience stability in their lives and have the best opportunities in terms of their health and well-being.

There are several teams within our service and we work within three tiers of need:

- 1. Early Intervention**
- 2. Care and support, safeguarding, and care needs**
- 3. Specialist Teams**

In Gwynedd, we believe that every child and young person should be given the opportunity to fulfil his/her full potential. We recognise that children develop best when they are supported to grow and succeed within their families and communities. We also recognise that providing early intervention is critical in helping children and their families to thrive and to reduce the need for more intensive services.

In order to better meet the needs of children and their families, we need to work in an integrated way. We, therefore, want to develop the way in which we offer and provide services for families by adopting the Supporting Families Strategy.

The Supporting Families Strategy

Improvement Priority 3



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

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.

We will review our existing arrangements in this field in order to do more of what works to meet the needs of children and their families. Offering support to some families before matters escalate will be essential to help children and families prosper and to reduce the need for more intensive services.

We will ensure a clear vision with key partners such as the Health Board, together with our communities and the Third Sector, to provide the best outcomes for those children, young people, and families who need our help.

Supporting People's Well-being

Improvement Priority 3



In the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023 published in March 2018 we planned for the '**Tackling Poverty**' project in order to support the people of Gwynedd to cope with changes to welfare and benefits (in particular Universal Credit) and to give opportunities to people who are not part of the labour market. This project succeeded to increase the income levels of a number of families and campaigns such as 'Look after the Pennies' helped to alleviate some of the impact of moving to new benefit payment arrangements.

The Universal Credit has now been operational in Gwynedd since December 2018, therefore there is no need to place as much focus on our response to that change. There is so much work that needs to be done in the field of tackling poverty to try to alleviate the impact of poverty on the people of Gwynedd, therefore from 2019 onwards we will be throwing the net wider and concentrating on the preventative field and the support that all Council services offer to the county's residents in order to address some of the obstacles 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, obtaining and maintaining a home, maintaining healthy relationships, dealing with substance misuse and 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.

During the next period of the Council Plan, we will reach an agreement on the direction, scope and a work programme. '**Supporting People's Well-being**' to 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.

Early Intervention

Gwynedd has established services and a track record of success and we have already developed a number of effective preventive projects. The Council commissions two large, grant-funded, anti-poverty programmes: Flying Start and Families First, which support children and their families.

Flying Start

Our purpose is to make a positive difference to the life opportunities of children under four years of age in specific areas of Gwynedd, through providing parenting, book-keeping, cookery, play, day care, and nursery group provision packs.

During the 2017-18 year, the Flying Start referral panel dealt with 437 service referrals. This compares to 350 complaints during 2016/17. A number of the intervention packs were delivered to the multi-agency teams to be implemented, including health, child care, supporting families, or early language development staff.



Percentage of families that have reported progress after receiving a service from the Team Around the Family

**2015/16
25%**

**2016/17
95%**

**2017/18
92%**



Team Around the Family

Our purpose is to intervene early as soon as problems emerge within families, but this takes place on a voluntary basis with the family's permission. We will help by responding to needs and by providing appropriate services.

We received 649 referrals to the Team Around the Family in 2017/18 and a high percentage of families noted a positive difference in their lives following the intervention.

'Children First' Areas

We are trialling 'Children First' areas in the Maesgeirchen area of Bangor, to help create more integrated services and to reduce the amount of harmful experiences in childhood and to foster strength of character in our children and young people. This work is in its early stages, but the Children First plan is a priority for the Department.

Youth services

The opportunity to socialise, take part in activities and continue to learn and develop new skills outside school is very important to the County's young people. However, due to pressure on Council resources and the need to modernise to coincide with the aspirations of the County's young people, we have changed how the Council provides their youth service. Therefore in 2017/18 we have established a new youth service across Gwynedd.

Our aim is to continue to support young people to learn and develop skills for personal, emotional, social and educational purposes.

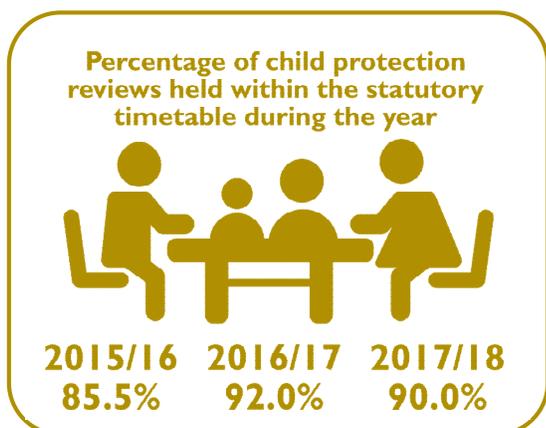
Care and support, safeguarding, and care needs

Most children and young people in Gwynedd live happy, safe lives and enjoy opportunities to learn and play. However, some children and families need more formal advice and support at times.

The Council is responsible for leading, investigating and managing the county's safeguarding children interventions. We work closely with schools, the police, the health board, doctors, and health visitors etc. to fulfil this statutory responsibility. The responsibility for safeguarding is one of the Council's most important responsibilities.

The Information, Advice and Support Service maintains high standards when responding on time to referrals that may relate to safeguarding, and referrals for care and support. In order to safeguard children and young people we respond to referrals without delay. When those referrals include concerns about allegations of abuse, we need to investigate those allegations in accordance with the Child Protection Guidances. We will decide each case within twenty four hours in order to determine the best way to proceed.

The Social Work Teams offer intensive support and intervention to children and families. Social workers regularly see children and their families and keep in touch with them, remaining alert to issues of risk and reducing risk for children and young people. We ensure that resources are available to support them and that their needs are clear to us. Plans are then in place to respond to their needs. At times, we refer them to teams that provide more specialist intervention.



We are very keen to develop our interventions with families, and the Supporting Families Strategy and the intention to work in a more integrated way will help us provide earlier intervention for families to ensure we meet their needs before problems escalate. We also carry out child protection inspections; and, sometimes, some families need highly intensive support and we need to bring children who are in danger into the Council's care.

Children usually come into our care under highly challenging circumstances, and we are as ambitious for these children as anyone would be for his/her own child. To ensure that children and young people experience stability, we support children to live at home with support where this is possible. Emphasis is also placed on trying to place a child with members of his/her extended family or friends of the family. Where this is not possible, the child will be placed with registered foster carers or, at times, some children and young people will need specialist residential units to meet specific needs.



The Fostering Team's role is to ensure that we have enough foster parents to meet the needs of children who are not able to live at home. We assess and support foster carers so that they can provide children who come into our care with the necessary support, and this is a high priority for the Department. We are aware that children who are not in stable situations need the best opportunity to test those boundaries that are crucial for good development. This lays the foundation for achieving the best results for them.

While a child is under the Council's care, it is our responsibility to provide a clear care plan for him/her that is reviewed regularly in order to ensure that the right decisions are made for the benefit of the child and that there are no delays to the plan.



The Post-16 team supports young people who either need to be safeguarded or who need care and support and this includes young people who have left care up to 25 years old. The workers see the young people regularly and encourage them to keep good contact with their families and develop their skills to live independently. The 'When I'm Ready' Plan gives young people who are not ready to leave their foster placement on their 18th birthday the choice to stay on until they are ready to do so.

The Specialist Teams

The purpose of the Edge of Care Team is to reduce needs by offering intensive intervention and support to children who are about to enter care, or who have just entered care, or to return children home from care safely. By working with the children and their families, the physical and mental health needs and the emotional well-being needs of the children and their families are met.

The Derwen Team provides a service for sick and disabled children young people and their families. We provide support for young, disabled people to help their inclusion in community activities and life, and to increase their skills so they become more independent. We provide periods of respite care for a great number of families through a support service. It is a multidisciplinary team that works in partnership with the Health Board. We have social workers, nurses and psychologists working in the team and, because of the wide range of complex needs, our workers need to possess expert skills to respond to the needs of the children and their families.

The Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) offers specialise intervention for families where the misuse of alcohol and drugs by parent and carers is a risk factor for children. Because of the intensive nature of the intervention, the service has prioritised it for families where the risk to children is high.



The purpose of the Youth Justice Service is to work intensively with children and young people who have offended and to prevent them from being repeat offenders. We offer a wide range of specialist interventions and work with the whole family to find solutions to help the children and young people from re-offending. We also work preventively with children and young people to prevent them from offending in the first place. This is done in partnership with schools and within the individuals' communities. We are a multi-agency team and we work in partnership with the Police, the Health Board, Careers Wales, North Wales Housing





How we ensure the quality of Safeguarding

In order assure the Council that our safeguarding arrangements are robust, we have a Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit that focuses on different aspects of this important field. **The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit concentrates on different aspects in this important field.** We implement the statutory duties to review cases of Looked After Children, and provide guidance on child protection, and chair Case Conferences and Strategic Meetings where allegations have been made about professionals.

We hold child protection conferences in partnership with the families and other workers. Intervening with a family to safeguard the child can be very difficult for them. Often, they do not welcome this support and often cooperation is often through enforcement. Our aim is to ensure that the child's voice is more prominent in these discussions and that families take a more effective part in their safeguarding plan.

Independent Reviewing Officers monitor every looked after child and young person's care plan. They ensure that the care plans have given appropriate consideration and weight to the wishes and feelings of the child, and that the child fully understands his/her situation bearing in mind the child's age and comprehension. Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) assure the Council that the interests of the child are safeguarded throughout their time in care. They listen to children, make sure they are happy with their plans, ensure their opinion is heard and that their plans are followed, and that they are sufficiently empowered to take action if the plans are not followed.

