



Housing and Property Department



The Housing and Property Department is a new department, established during 2019, with the aim of facilitating the Council's ability to face one of the biggest challenges in the county, which is to ensure an adequate supply of suitable, good-quality housing to address the needs of a changing population.

The Department is also responsible for managing the Council's property assets in order to ensure they are suitable for providing services to the county's residents.

Together with the day to day work outlined below, this Department leads on the following priority projects:

- 1) A shortage of suitable homes for the people of Gwynedd: Secure approval for the Housing Plan and begin taking action – (Improvement Priority 4)
- 2) Easy and clear access to an advice and enquiries service on housing matters: Establish a single front door and helpdesk for the public in order to help them with their housing problems – (Improvement Priority 4)
- 3) Letting social housing to local people: Create a new lettings policy for the county which will give greater priority to local people – (Improvement Priority 4)

Housing Matters

The Council uses the Social Housing Grant from the Welsh Government to facilitate the Housing Associations' ability to build more houses for local people. Our Housing Action Plan sets a challenge to try to build 500 new social houses by 2026. We now have a new Local Housing Allocation Policy, so that Gwynedd's residents will be given priority for the tenancy of these new houses.

Number of new units developed with the Social Housing Grant



Homelessness

The Homelessness Service provides advice and assistance to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The team fulfills the Council's statutory duty to meet the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Their work includes:

- helping to prevent homelessness before it occurs
- assessing the accommodation and support needs of individuals and families who are threatened with homelessness
- helping to find somewhere else to live when an individual or family are facing becoming homeless
- providing temporary accommodation in emergency cases, and securing accommodation for those in priority need.



Temporary Accommodation

Number of homeless people who were provided with emergency temporary accommodation



2017/18 - **289**

2018/19 - **339**

2019/20 - **401**

The service provides many temporary accommodation places until a permanent property becomes available for homeless people, including two Council-owned hostels, 68 properties leased by private owners, and 31 properties leased by Housing Associations. Accommodation was provided to 401 families/individuals in 2019/20. The number who are facing homelessness in Gwynedd has been increasing consistently for some years, and there is increasing pressure on the service to

deal with the need to accommodate people at short-notice.

Tenancy support



Since many homeless people are vulnerable, support is provided to ensure that individuals can maintain their tenancy and avoid becoming homeless again. Support is provided on a number of issues such as claiming benefits, support for the maintenance of accommodation, understanding rights and responsibilities, and applying for grants for furnishing a property.

Social Housing Register



The Gwynedd Housing Options Team administrates the Common Housing Register and works in partnership with the social housing providers in the county, namely Adra, Grŵp Cynefin and North Wales Housing. The team's primary aim is to prioritise access to social housing on the basis of the most need in our communities and to provide advice to residents on the housing options that are available in Gwynedd. With the

Number of families given new tenancies in social housing during the year



2017/18 - **573**

2018/19 - **621**

2019/20 - **696**

support of the Gwynedd Housing Options Team, over 690 families managed to secure a new social tenancy in 2019/20.

Refugee relocation scheme

Since 2016 Gwynedd has contributed to the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement programme. The Council committed to welcome and provide a home for up to 40 individuals who had been forced to flee war-stricken Syria. We have now fulfilled our promise as a Council and take pride in the fact that we have helped eight families to settle in Gwynedd.



As a result of this programme's success, the Council has now committed to welcome up to 20 of the most vulnerable refugees identified by the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as part of the Worldwide Refugee programme over the next three years.

Travellers' site

There is a statutory requirement on every Local Authority to meet the need for suitable sites for travellers. We have been managing a purpose-made site in Llandygái for many years, and following the receipt of grant aid from the Welsh Government, a £1.8m investment was made there recently to improve the facilities and expand the provision to meet the demand within the county.

Housing Enforcement



The purpose of the Enforcement Team is to ensure good-quality, warm and safe housing for tenants within the county. We are responsible for enforcing standards in 9,000 private-rented housing and 8,500 social housing in Gwynedd.

We are also in charge of the HMO Licensing Scheme which checks that such houses reach the expected standards. At present, 900 houses in multiple occupation have received a licence from us following a detailed inspection process.

The Unit also works jointly with Rent Smart Wales to maintain a national register of rented housing, inspects dwellings for Home Office cases, deals with over 300 complaints annually relating to cases of nuisance, deals with problems resulting from empty houses and deals with approximately 20 annual cases of illegal eviction.

Number of people assisted by resolving hazards in their homes

2017/18 - **1,077**

2018/19 - **1,454**

2019/20 - **807**



Housing Alterations

This unit is responsible for promoting the independence and well-being of Gwynedd residents by providing timely and high-standard alterations to the homes of children and adults with physical disabilities. Around £1.3m a year is invested on schemes such as creating accessible bathrooms, installing ramps outside the house, building extensions etc. Around 30 of these are referrals received from hospitals so as to enable patients to return home. We also fund around 900 minor alterations a year, such as installing handrails, mobile ramps and other small alterations.



The unit administers interest-free loans for repairing houses that are in a poor state and which are owned by residents on low incomes, and there is significant and constant demand for these loans.

Empty Homes

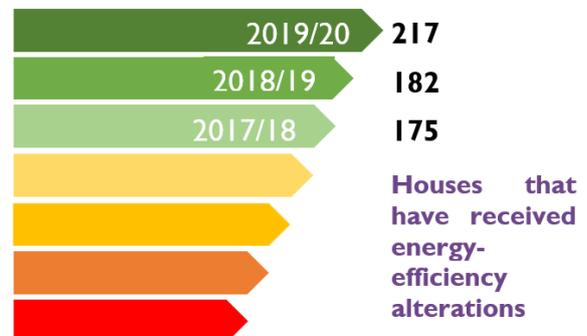


There are approximately 1,300 empty houses in Gwynedd at present, and we have an important role to play in attempting to bring these houses back into use in order to contribute towards the number of affordable housing that is available to local people. Since 2008, over 600 empty houses have been brought back into use through methods such as offering grants to first-time buyers, providing loans to landlords and the use of enforcement powers. This led

to us being able to provide a home to over 1,000 local people in houses that had formerly been empty for some time. During 2019/20 we were fortunate in attracting an additional grant in order to bring empty homes back into use, which explains the jump in numbers this year.

Fuel Poverty

Most of the Government's resources in this field are directed towards the Housing Associations but the Council has also been able to make a valuable contribution in this important field. We have a number of schemes that are funded from various sources, with the aim of assisting those who are most likely to suffer fuel poverty.



Property Matters

The purpose of the Property Service is to ensure that we have properties that are suitable to provide the Council's services, and to manage our property assets effectively and efficiently.

The Council owns 965 buildings located on 477 sites across the county. These are mostly buildings used to provide services to the residents of Gwynedd but we also own and use non-operational properties to promote the Council's objectives e.g. economic development, the provision of social care etc. Many of these non-operational properties are leased to local businesses and other organisations, which generates an annual revenue income of around £1.m for the Council.

Maintenance



The Buildings Maintenance Unit provides a 24/7 help-desk to deal with approximately 8,000 requests a year for repair work to buildings. Many of these are requests for work that require an urgent response to prevent the building from having to close.

In order to carry out this work we work in partnership with a number of local contractors, but we have also developed an in-house team of tradesmen who can undertake building work, joinery, plumbing etc.

Property Safety

We ensure that our buildings are safe to use for providing services to the residents of Gwynedd by ensuring that we comply with the various statutory duties and ensuring that we have an effective maintenance programme. We manage risks relating to asbestos, Legionnaire's disease, Radon and fire risks and ensure that electrical, gas, oil, water etc. systems are safe for the thousands of residents who spend time in our buildings every day.

Property Development



A concept design of the new school in Cricieth that will open in September 2023

The purpose of the unit is to develop new buildings or convert and renovate existing buildings to improve the service provided to the residents of Gwynedd.

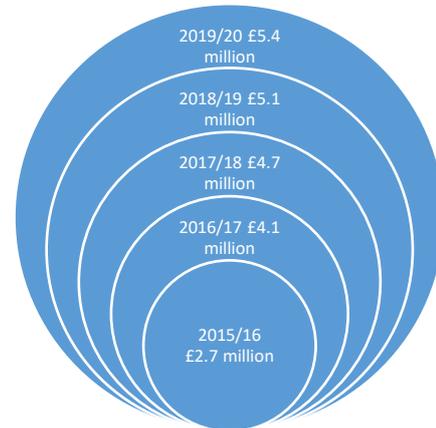
By working closely with the Education Modernisation Team, the Property Development Unit has completed a £60m programme of new school buildings over the past 7 years, and a new £47m programme is now being developed over the course of the next four years.

The team is also undertaking a programme of improvements and extensions to the county's care homes and a programme of early years units to address the need in several individual communities throughout Gwynedd. In addition, the team has embarked on the delivery of a programme of the Housing Action Plan's development, in response to the housing needs of Gwynedd's residents.

Estate Management

Our purpose is to ensure that the Council receives the best value in managing its portfolio of property assets, and ensuring that only those assets which we genuinely need are retained. Over the past decade we have been able to reduce the size of the Council's property estate by over 25%, ensuring that our spending on the maintenance and provision of buildings is kept to a minimum, in order to release financial resources for the provision of front-line services. This will continue as opportunities arise, but we will also consider any assets that are no longer required to deliver the content of the Housing Action Plan.

Cumulative income from property sales



The Estates team is also responsible for managing all the Council's leases including the Smallholdings Estate and the Industrial Properties portfolio which includes the Intec and Mentec Enterprise Centres, generating an annual rental income of over £1.1m.

Managing Offices



The Offices Team provides office space for approximately 1,500 staff in seven large buildings, including all the related services associated with this such as care-taking, cleaning and security arrangements for all the buildings and their users. We also let office space to external tenants.



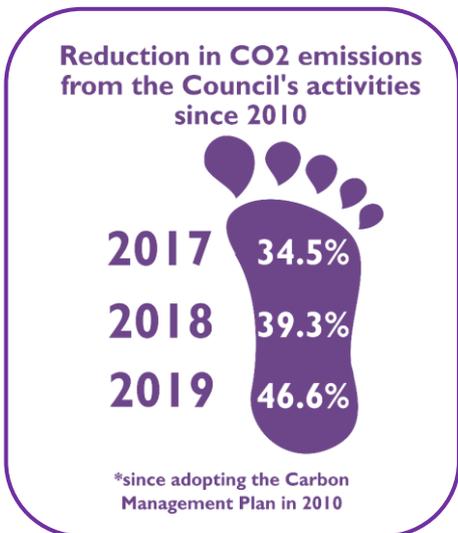
Cleaning Service

We also provide a **cleaning service** for a large number of the various buildings used to provide the Council's front-line services. We are also a provider for external organisations.

Energy Conservation Unit

Following the adoption of our Carbon Management Plan, the Energy Team is implementing a number of projects to **reduce carbon emissions**. Since the adoption of the Carbon Management Plan in 2010, we have succeeded in reducing the carbon emissions from our activities by 46.6%. The work

carried out by the team to reduce our usage has created annual revenue savings of over £1.1m for the Council. We have started working on identifying how we can contribute further to the Council's aspiration to tackle the climate crisis.



Our Energy Conservation unit has succeeded to establish an energy purchase framework that enables us to secure a cheaper price for our electricity and gas. By doing this we will save approximately £200,000 over five years.

The programme for raising awareness amongst school children has been an important part of this work, using characters such as Sbarci and Fflic. www.sbarciafflic.org



Pest Control and Dog Wardens



We offer pest control services for the control and culling of all sorts of pests, through contracting and by responding to daily calls by the public for assistance to control pests in their homes or businesses.



We also provide the statutory service of looking after stray dogs.

Telecare



We provide a service for the installation and maintenance of Telecare equipment to the residents of Gwynedd. This is a hugely popular service amongst vulnerable individuals and their families, where the use of Assistive Technology enables people to continue to live independently in their own home.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives
- Live in quality homes within our communities
- Live in a natural Welsh society
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible
- Benefit from the beauty of the county's natural environment.