



BWRDD PARTNERIAETH RHANBARTHOL  
**GOGLEDD CYMRU**  
**NORTH WALES**  
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD

# Market Stability Report Update 2023

This update describes what has changed since the first Market Stability Report was published in November 2022. The first report set out the availability of care and support across the region, assessed how well current provision meets people's needs and recommended ways to make sure enough support is available in future.

The update is based on a light-touch review and will be followed in 2024 by a more comprehensive review including updates about the population projections and other data based on the Census 2021, which are not yet available. We are also developing a regional commissioning strategy for older people's care homes which will identify regional priorities and help inform the next Market Stability Report update.

The Regional Partnership Board has developed a Strategic Capital Plan for North Wales published in July 2023 which sets out a 10-year view of the capital investment needs of community infrastructure to provide social care and primary and community health care, which will help to address the needs set out in our Population Needs Assessment and Market Stability Report.

## Summary of regional priorities

The first report identified domiciliary care (care in people's own homes) as a priority market, with current private sector providers unable to fulfil the demand due to staffing challenges. Other key themes were:

- Recruitment of staff. The employment market is highly competitive and competitive pay rates and employment benefits need to be offered in order to attract people.
- Integrated Domiciliary Care recruitment project between local authorities and the health board and development of integrated cross-organisational roles and career pathways.

- Terms and conditions. These need to reflect and be worthy of the social care role, and its importance in the health and care system as well as reflecting that these are skilled roles.
- Retention of staff is poor due to poor terms and conditions in the social care sector. The cost of fuel and the cost-of-living crisis is now being felt in the sector where providers are seeing more staff experiencing in-work poverty.
- Staff are also leaving the sector due to challenging working conditions and lack of respect for the work they do, and the levels of responsibility involved. Staff feel undervalued and overworked.
- Staff who are new to the sector are not staying in the sector long term as they feel overwhelmed by the intensity of the roles particularly those supporting people with complex needs and behaviours that challenge staff. Providers and commissioners need to better support for staff to meet the challenges of working in social care.
- Service transformation programmes are a priority, and they should accelerate the focus on enabling flexibility in using commissioned care hours, where providers can be trusted to flex the package of care hours in partnership with the individual who is being cared for. While appreciating budget restraints for all, the flexibility would improve quality and bring costs savings in terms of achieving more person-centred outcomes and reduction in administration costs.
- Development of true partnership working between commissioners and providers was identified as a key focus.
- Develop partnerships with care home providers to provide low level residential care / respite services to ease the pressure on domiciliary care provisions.
- Develop opportunities in micro commissioning and direct payments as an alternative to the traditional home care model where appropriate.
- Increase support for unpaid carers to reduce the pressures on home care services and look at carer led solutions, such as increased (and greater variety of) carer breaks (respite)
- Increase the availability of specialist placements in care homes for older people, adults with mental health needs, learning disability and people with dementia.
- Increase the availability of emergency and longer-term accommodation for children and young people with complex needs including mental health, learning disability and emotional behavioural needs.

# What has changed?

## Recruitment and retention of staff

Recruitment and retention of staff is still an ongoing challenge for North Wales across the sector. Each local authority and the health board is working hard to promote the care sector as a career of choice, and some have created dedicated social care recruitment roles to try to encourage people to join the sector.

### Regional programmes update

The North Wales Taster to Care programme, which is funded up to the end of March 2024, gives people furthest away from the labour market a chance to experience of working in the care sector first hand through training and a 4-week placement. The programme has received great feedback and 12 people who undertook a work placement have now found work within the sector as a result.

The WeCare campaign continues to promote the care sector throughout North Wales, working closely with local schools and colleges and established a regional ambassador programme. The North Wales team work closely with the national WeCare team and are developing a WeCare brand for North Wales to help provide up-to-date information about job and training opportunities across the region. This will allow us to collect quantitative data about the impact of promotional initiatives.

The Social Care Fair Work Forum are clarifying what good practice terms and conditions should look like for those delivering social care and developing a related reward and recognition framework. North Wales partners will be able to feed into and help shape this national piece of work.

### Gwynedd

Gwynedd created a dedicated Marketing and Development role to focus on Social Care recruitment, and achievements include:

- A substantial media campaign working on changing perceptions around working in care (career option as opposed to a job)
- Streamlining the application process for jobs within the care sector

- Transport plan - offering free driving lessons, use of pool electric cars and electric bikes to staff
- Offering more work experience opportunities for school/college age
- Substantial presence in physical events such as the National Eisteddfod 2023 to promote careers within the care sector.

## **Conwy**

Conwy created a Social Care Employment Mentor role who works with individuals to support them into Social Care employment, which includes:

- CV Advice & Writing Guidance, Job Searching, Completing Applications, Interview Preparation, 'In Work' Support
- Support individuals to undertake 'taster sessions' in a care setting
- Support individuals to access pre-employment training
- Facilitate work experience programmes
- Identify and help to overcome various barriers to employment.

29 people have secured jobs within the sector, and have supported 3 voluntary programmes, introduced people to the free online Introduction to Social Care course with 11 successfully completing.

## **Denbighshire**

Denbighshire have a dedicated HR specialist for Social Care and have implemented rolling recruitment, different job roles (to reflect the complexity of some care packages and to allow for career progression from carer to manager), driving lessons for carers, E vehicles and E bikes. Working Denbighshire provide Work Start placements within the care sector. A marketing campaign included liveried vehicles and branded jackets for carers to wear which all include the strap line "make people smile".

## **Flintshire**

In Flintshire, Creed Communications Ltd were commissioned to undertake a 3-month marketing campaign for social work and occupational therapy recruitment between May and August 2023. To prepare for the campaign Creed interviewed key stakeholders to understand Flintshire's unique selling points as an employer and to

form the messaging framework. The Council opted for a recruitment message of “a breath of fresh air” as a focal point.

From the recruitment agencies perspective this was successful. The adverts themselves were seen 550,000 times across various platforms and clicked on 7,000 times. Around 2,000 then clicked to search for jobs on Flintshire’s internal job site.

## **Wrexham**

In the aftermath of the pandemic the number of people waiting for care in Wrexham increased and the length of waiting time each person was significantly longer than it had been before the pandemic. Wrexham looked at overseas recruitment as a way to recruit into the sector and worked with a small number of providers who successfully used the UK Home Officer Tier 2 Overseas Workers Visa, which increased capacity in the market to provide services more quickly. They also helped integrate workers from overseas, including with cultural references, local geography and transport, and general working conditions. While this has been working well in Wrexham, work needs to continue to recruit care workers from the local area, which is a challenge like elsewhere in the UK.

## **Recognise the care sector’s importance in keeping people well in their own homes**

This is still a priority for the region and there’s a shared understanding that we need to focus on keeping people in their own homes. However, there are challenges to this with increased pressure on the domiciliary care market. Some rural areas of North Wales are struggling to support people in their own homes due to the availability of carers who are able to travel, rural geography and poor public transport links. Keeping people well in their own homes is becoming more difficult as the number of people with more complex needs increases, which will continue to be a challenge.

## **Gwynedd**

Gwynedd began transitioning to a new domiciliary care model in early April 2022 to provide more stability across the county, with providers allocated to particular

geographical areas as opposed to being across the county. This should aid staff recruitment/retention and overall efficiency by reducing travel and bureaucracy.

Social workers now work closer with providers to overcome any problems. Providers had previously been limited to 'time and task', but they now have flexibility to work around what the individual being supported wants. Challenges include service users not wanting to change provider which meant the social worker, provider, health, and project manager had to all work together to resolve issues or concerns before the transfer to the new working arrangements. Prior to this the Social Worker would have transferred the package back to the provider the service user wanted.

## **Conwy**

Conwy is improving the way they commission domiciliary care. Moving from 'Time and Task,' to working in a 'Wellbeing Outcome Focused and Person Centred' approach.

The benefits from this service change includes improving service delivery and outcomes and enabling them to remain in their own homes for longer. It will also support timely and safe hospital discharge and increase support for carers of individuals who are receiving domiciliary care already.

The change will increase the stability in the market and support providers with staff recruitment and retention with the commitment to purchase block hours in advance with planned payment. This will also ensure the brokerage process continues to be efficient as possible to enable a more integrated working approach between Community Resource Teams and providers.

## **Denbighshire**

Denbighshire remodelled in-house provision some years ago into three multidisciplinary domiciliary care hubs based around extra care housing. The hub-based care jobs range from entry level care and support through to senior care and support with a clear progression pathway. New job roles reflect changing needs and complexities and citizens should be able to move through the continuum of support available as their needs change. Domiciliary care can be delivered to the local community (within walking distance) from the extra care buildings. There are plans for an additional hub in the South of Denbighshire, operating out of Corwen.

Future plans will focus on early intervention and prevention in line with the 'Rebalancing of Social Care' agenda.

Denbighshire also work with local micro providers to plug domiciliary care gaps, where appropriate. Lack of cover is a particular issue in the rural south of the county, which unfortunately is leading to some temporary residential placements and delayed discharges from hospital. There remains a commitment to grow provision in the south of Denbighshire, either by expanding internal provision or by considering alternative ways of growing the independent sector.

Denbighshire continues to embed the ethos of Moving with Dignity into all services with staff assessing for or provide right-sized care. They are reviewing double handed care packages and supporting care staff supported to consider single handed care, where appropriate, and/or work directly with the citizen/family and lead practitioner, with relevant training as funding allows. They are working with the Head of Occupational Therapy at the health board to ensure single handed care is the default position on hospital discharge and is included in the discharge policy where appropriate.

## **Flintshire**

Flintshire have started to introduce block contracts for domiciliary care to attract providers to areas where sourcing domiciliary care is difficult. They are also now directly commissioning with Micro Care organisation who have completed Flintshire's quality framework.

## **Wrexham**

91% of services in Wrexham are being provided by externally contracted providers and their own provision focuses on short term, reablement services whilst the majority of ongoing and long-term services are commissioned by the external market. Of the external market, 86% is made up of locally grown, locally based providers and 14% is with a national provider with a local base. The Council uses the North Wales Domiciliary Care Framework to call off packages of support but also has entered into spot contracts with new market entrants where those Framework providers have been unable to deliver due to staffing levels.

There are particular challenges in delivering services across the south of the borough and demand is generally consistent and in excess of the number of carers available,

meaning people generally wait longer than other areas of the borough. In south of the borough, demand fluctuates but the rural geography of the area means the supply of carers isn't readily available and the travel time between houses can render the service provision less financially viable than other areas.

During the last 12 months, the number of people receiving domiciliary care increased by 7% whilst the number of hours provided increased by around 15%, indicating more people being referred to services at a point where their care and support needs are higher.

## **Work with care homes to provide low level residential care and carer breaks (respite)**

Care home provision of low-level residential care and respite has continued to be a challenge due to high demand and increasing needs for residential care. It's currently only offered by some homes in North Wales and we need to work closer with care homes to provide this more widely.

Denbighshire have some provision for reablement focussed short- term stays within in-house care homes, fully adapted sheltered housing and extra care accommodation as well as a carers flat available in Ruthin.

Respite opportunities for carers are discussed in every What Matters conversation including highlighting the availability of micro-providers and other resources available in local communities. This also enables greater choice and control for unpaid carers and citizens.

## **Micro-commissioning and direct payments**

Work to identify and train new micro-providers continues throughout the region. Many of the Councils work with 'Community Catalysts' a company that supports people and communities to start small businesses or community enterprises that offer help and support in their local areas. This is in addition to, rather than as a replacement for traditional domiciliary care provision. Some people use direct payments and others pay privately for micro-care.



## **Gwynedd**

Gwynedd have worked with 'Community Catalysts' over the last year and have three individuals now advertising their services on the ['Small Good Stuff' website](#). This work will continue.

Gwynedd are also re-modelling their direct payments service, and the direct payment support service is being brought in house. Over the next few months, the direct payments team will develop elements such as the PA register and a direct payments Website.

## **Conwy**

A new internal section has been created and they are focussing on raising the profile of Direct Payments. This will be done by development of web pages, social media, community talks and ensuring that front line staff are skilled and confident to discuss the benefits of Direct Payments with citizens. The Rowan Organisation runs a free independent support service for Conwy County Borough Council. They have Direct Payments Advisers who can help service users to decide whether to apply for Direct Payments or not.

## **Denbighshire**

In Denbighshire micro-providers support around 200 citizens, around 50 of which use direct payments. Around 30 people enquire about training to become/establish as a micro-provider each quarter. Micro-provider's available capacity has reduced overall which suggests higher uptake of the providers in Denbighshire.

## **Flintshire**

In Flintshire, between April 2023 and October 2023, 12 new micro-carers were established, giving a total of 38 micro-carers evenly split between direct payments and privately purchased support. Flintshire had 42 enquiries from prospective micro-carers over the same period, which shows interest is increasing - there were 49 inquiries between April 2022 and March 2023. There are an additional 12 people 'active' in establishing their micro-care business.

Flintshire created a micro-care information portal on the Council's website, which will move from its current location on Care@Flintshire, and developed a live portal

developed with micro-carers where they can upload information, which will replace the existing micro-care trading list.

Flintshire supported a micro-care provider to setup as a day service for people with dementia in the community, running out of the separate locations to cater for demand in different areas. There are 14 people now attending this service, providing valuable respite services and outcome focused interventions for people with dementia. The Council also directly commissioned space at the service for one individual as an alternative to domiciliary care for those specific days. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

## **Wrexham**

Wrexham Council began working with Community Catalysts in 2020 and successfully developed and sustained a growing number of Micro Enterprises, particularly in the more rural areas of the South West and where people have smaller packages of care.

The Community Catalysts service in Wrexham was evaluated by the North Wales RIC hub in 2022, which found that between 1 April 2021 and 30 September 2022 a total of 53 micro enterprises were established with a total of 61 jobs created, providing care to 248 individuals. The evaluation found that views about the care provided were that it was the same or better than other models. Below is one of the stories collected from the evaluation.

### **Mr B's story - Part 1: A helping hand**

“Mr B is 83 years old, until recently had been living independently without support. He likes to grow vegetables in the garden, his weekly routine includes driving to the shops and visiting a friend.

After a recent stay in hospital Mr B was unable to cook, do housework, and he needed support with his medication. I also helped to maintain his garden during this time.

As his health improved, Mr B confided in me that the last time he went shopping he had a fall and cut his face. He was worried this would happen again. I offered to go

shopping together, and we did this a few of times. I drove him initially and he was unsteady on his feet, but he said he felt more confident with me there, holding onto me at first. With a helping hand he was able to get used to being outside again and he gained confidence to go out alone and is working towards getting back to his old routine.”

## Increase support for unpaid carers

There are around 67,000 people aged 5 years and over providing unpaid care in North Wales according to the 2021 census.

Surprisingly, the overall number of unpaid carers has fallen since 2011 and the ONS suggests a number of reasons for this, including changes in the nature of caring during the pandemic and the high levels of deaths during the pandemic. However, it also suggests that the change in question framing could have made a difference. While the 2011 Census question mentioned providing unpaid care for family, friends or neighbours, the 2021 question referred to caring for anyone. This will have had an impact because people don't often recognise themselves as unpaid carers.

**Figure 1: Number of unpaid carers (age 5 or over)**

County	Total number of unpaid carers	Unpaid carers as a percentage of all age 5 or over
Anglesey	6,745	10%
Gwynedd	9,990	9%
Conwy	11,640	11%
Denbighshire	10,174	11%
Flintshire	15,262	10%
Wrexham	12,858	10%
North Wales	66,665	10%

Source: Census 2021, RM113 - Provision of unpaid care by age.

There is however a distinct increase in both the number and proportion of people providing a substantial amount of unpaid care across North Wales. More than half of the people providing unpaid care are now delivering more than 20 hours per week,

rising from 42% in 2011 to 55% in 2021 - a total of about 36,600 people in 2021 compared to about 32,750 in 2011.

**Figure 2: Unpaid care by amount of hours per week, 2011 and 2022**

Number of hours unpaid care each week	2011	2021
1 to 19 hours/week	58%	45%
20 to 49 hours/week	14%	20%
50 or more hours/week	27%	35%
More than 20 hours/week	42%	55%

Source: Census 2021

Support for unpaid carers has increased across the local authorities with many new initiatives in addition to maintaining existing arrangements.

### **Ynys Môn (Anglesey)**

- Unpaid Carers Strategy Group on Ynys Mon meets quarterly with representatives from health, third sector and local authorities. The group deliver information days and events, including four events each year at leisure centres and community hubs with free activities and information. All new carers are given a 'welcome booklet' and information is available online and in hard copy.
- Designated Benefits Officer provides information and assistance in entitlements by signposting and completing benefits applications and grants including cost of living grants.
- Facilitate the Short Breaks fund, essential for carers' wellbeing, which currently supports: Carers Outreach, Mencap Mon, Action for Children, and Adferiad.
- The training department offer courses and information sessions free of charge to third sector organisations and unpaid carers.
- Local Authority and Welsh Government Carers Wellbeing Grant funding provides short breaks to unpaid carers in their caring role.
- Provide unpaid carers with meaningful breaks through the Welsh Government 'AMSER' fund.
- Identified unpaid carers within our partners / statutory organisations e.g., during carers week, in all the hospitals and via an in-house information drop-in for local authority staff. All secondary schools have a Young Carers Lead person and the

local colleges have a Welfare Officer who is responsible for ensuring that young carers needs are being met (emotionally and educationally).

Information shared via Social Media networks (Facebook and Instagram)

- Young carers ID card and App – [www.aidicymru](http://www.aidicymru) [AiDi | An innovative app and service for young carers](#)
- Informal advocacy support at schools via our ‘drop in’ service and when dealing with other professionals/multi-agency meetings.
- Support families with housing applications/transfers by providing letters of support to strengthen their case.
- Make young carers and their families aware of the financial help available, and if necessary, support them with applications.
- Action for Children Parent Talk Cymru - parenting support service for parents. [Parent Talk - Support for Parents from Action For Children](#)
- Action for Children’s Sidekick service. A confidential helpline service for young carers aged 13 to 18 in the UK. [Sidekick - Sidekick by Action for Children](#).

## Gwynedd

- Launched a website, [www.aidi.cymru](http://www.aidi.cymru) to make it easier for young carers to find information and self-refer themselves for support.
- The young carer officer raises awareness through presentations and educational resources about how to recognise, support and refer hidden young carers. For secondary schools, we’ve curated a mindful journal, a documentary and a book of activities, and for primary schools, a short animation and a colouring book (with additional information for parents).
- Forming a dementia super-group to co-produce a dementia strategic plan and inform delivery, with unpaid carers at the heart of developments.
- Dementia Actif ([Dementia Actif Gwynedd](#)) provides group physical activity opportunities to support and enhance the quality of life for people living with dementia and their carers. The activities offered include physical exercise classes, Boccia league, online activities, and various clubs, such as gardening.
- Offering activities and skills opportunities for young adults around the age where they transition between children’s and adult’s services. Set up a new group provision using the carers grant, and working closely with Derwen, (the Council’s Integrated Team for Disabled Children ([Integrated Team for Disabled Children \(Ilyw.cymru\)](#)), Education and other partner agencies, to fill a gap in services for

those who do not meet the criteria for the learning disability register but remain vulnerable and sometimes isolated when leaving school.

## Flintshire

- Reached out to unidentified carers through social media and shared a wide variety of information to appeal to as many different people and circumstances as possible. This has helped identify some carers earlier rather than at the point of crisis, especially male carers.
- Worked with education to raise the awareness of young carers in schools including a programme of training to ensure that teachers are aware of young carers, how to identify them, what support that they may need and how to make a referral for further support.
- Promoted the Direct Payments for Carers scheme and publishing information for social workers, refreshing processes, and sharing reminders to ensure that carers are considered in their assessments for the cared for. This led to conversations with carers at an earlier opportunity and an increase in the number of carer's needs assessments being completed by internal teams.
- Carers accessing traditional respite has still not increased to pre-pandemic levels, so they considered more creative ways to make sure carers supported and do not reach crisis point. This included an increase in the use of Direct Payments and exploring innovative options with the Amser ([Amser Programme 2023-25 - Carers Trust](#)) scheme and carer's respite funding through the Regional Integration Fund (RIF).
- Re-built the Flintshire internal carers group for employees which suffered during the pandemic, and working across portfolios to ensure carers are recognised and supported.

## Denbighshire

- Carers Strategy Group (a forum made up of representatives from a broad background ([Carers strategy | Denbighshire County Council](#))) meets regularly to share information and collaborate to strengthen information and advice, support and services for unpaid carers and families.
- Awarded a new contract to NEWCIS ([Home - NEWCIS](#)) following a full tender exercise, involving unpaid carers from the outset. Held meetings with local focus groups to discuss what was working well, what wasn't and gain information to help identify areas for improvement. This informed and influenced the new

service specification, which emphasises the need to explore a wider range of short breaks/respite options, to enable more choice and control for carers and the individuals they care for.

- A Healthy Carers Worker continues to improve and maintain health and wellbeing by advising on issues such as manual handling, back care and accessing professionals to address issues as well as dealing with crisis referrals where packages of carer fail or are unavailable or support is resisted.
- Denbighshire Carer Assessors participated in the Community Engagement Meeting in Denbigh as part of the Listening Campaign, which forms part of the regional Dementia Campaign.
- Working collaboratively with Third sector organisations to raise awareness.
- Promoting new opportunities available through Amser, Direct Payments and pre-paid cards that unpaid carers can use for short breaks/respite. Supporting local providers to develop more personalised opportunities.
- Commission the award-winning Bridging the Gap voucher scheme to offer more flexibility to carers.
- Work closely with Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council ([DVSC](#)) to distribute small respite grants, which has worked extremely well. Established a grant panel and made awards to a wide range of organisations to support carers of all ages.
- Working Denbighshire and Denbighshire Employment Network and the Contracts and Commissioning team work closely with the Workforce Development team to ensure training opportunities are promoted and developed to support carers in their caring role.

## **Conwy**

- A strategic carers group oversees and directs the development of carers services, chaired by Conwy's Director of Social Services and attended by Conwy's Carers Champion.
- Conwy's in-house Carers Team has a carers officer on duty every day with good referral pathways to the in-house carers team across social care and health. To identify carers, SPOA plays an important part, as does the new dementia centre in Mochdre.
- The regional listening campaign, in Conwy, is working with communities such as Llanfairfechan, including carers.

- Celebrated the valuable contribution made by carers during Carers Week with an information day and by promoting links to community resources.
- Increased online presence and regularly update carers web pages with content such as banner links to Carers Wales “Me Time” training.

Services for carers include:

- 188 carers supported with 437.5 hrs weekly Sitting Service (includes Crossroads sitting service under the SLA)
- 77 people access day services, which provides valuable respite for carers, with a combined total of 1200 hours per week (as of 1/9/23)
- The 2023/24 Carers Respite Grant has been allocated across a range of existing service providers following proposals from providers.
- The Amser funding provides a person-centred, very flexible approach to short breaks.
- Llys Elian – 38 individuals have accessed respite, providing valuable carer respite.
- 300 citizens in receipt of Direct Payments, of those 48 are carers in receipt of Direct Payments for their own needs, outside of what the traditional support services offer.

## **Wrexham**

Work to support unpaid carers in Wrexham includes the following.

- Unpaid carers communications strategy developed in partnership with service providers and communications teams. This strategy shows how Wrexham identify unpaid carers and promote the valued contribution unpaid carers make to our communities.
- Worked with NEWCIS to create a webpage on the Council website for unpaid carers and with the communications team to publish articles around unpaid carers and where they can get advice and support.
- Offers Bridging the Gap funding through NEWCIS.
- Become a member of the Employers for Carers scheme with Carers Wales to help support staff who are unpaid carers including offering extra training to managers.



## **Increase specialist care home placements in care homes for older people, adults with mental health needs, learning disability and people with dementia**

Gwynedd have a general shortage of provision for people living with dementia, in both residential and nursing settings, and a shortage of general nursing beds. The point at which a person may require support within a care home setting has increased over the years due to the Council's approach to invest in domiciliary care, to support people to live in their own homes for longer. This means the demand for more complex care home placements has increased. There are also challenges when sourcing placements for people with complex mental health needs.

The Penrhos project, in the Llyn Peninsula area is progressing, looking to initially meet the housing and care needs of the current residents living on the site and also meeting current and future needs of older people living in the area, especially individuals requiring nursing care and dementia care. There will also be housing and care support for individuals with learning disabilities. Currently the project is at the stage of securing funding and planning permission has been granted'.

In Flintshire planning approval for an additional residential home has been agreed, this will be for residential and EMI (specialist dementia) services. Nursing and EMI Nursing placements are a significant challenge, homes have closed however it is anticipated that the new service will open in January 2024 in Mold.

## **Increase emergency and longer-term accommodation for children and young people with complex needs**

The intensity of need and pressure on services has increased significantly within the last year. There have been instances where some local authorities have been unable to gain placement anywhere within the UK for individuals due to the complexity of their needs and shortfall in supply. The recent need to place 22 Asylum Seeking Children (approximately 16-18 years old), within Gwynedd has increased the strain on the service.

Gwynedd have decided that Small Group Homes (SGH) approach is the best way to meet needs and are looking for suitable sites. The Council will be seeking Housing

with Care Fund (HCF) funding of £2 million; recruitment and provision is intended within the next 15 months should they be successful.

In Conwy a new project has been set up 'Transforming Local Residential and in-house Placements for Children and Young People'. This project is looking at how best to bring more services back in-house for children and young people. As this project starts to progress there are 3 other projects builds happening at present.

Bwthyn Y Ddol - 6 Short term placements (a joint venture between Conwy and Denbighshire Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board). This new build property will accommodate 4 children primarily for assessment and family intervention. It will also accommodate 2 children in a smaller unit, used in emergency situations or planned discharges from hospital in cases where the child will benefit from specialist support and risk reduction strategies to enable them to move to family or foster care. The new build is due to open in late 2024/early 2025.

New Glan Yr Afon - New purpose built 4 bedded in-house residential placement for those aged 6-18 years (long term placements, with opportunities to consider step down dependant on care). The new build is anticipated to be open late 2024/early 2025.

Sylva Gardens - A residential property being refurbished and extended to provide flats for 3 children with learning disabilities who are currently out of county. Due to open July 2024.

In Flintshire the development of the children's in-house service is under way with 3 out of 5 new homes successfully registered with CIW. There are two small group homes, one of which has been supporting children since April 2022. These homes can accommodate up to two children who are siblings. In October 2022 the refurbishment of two other larger properties was completed, both of which can take up to 4 children at any time and there is an emergency provision attached to one of the homes.

## **Care home closures**

The most recent care home closure in Gwynedd was the Foelas Residential Care Home in Llanrug, closing in April 2022, with a loss of 13 beds. This impacted our ability to provide care in the region on top of existing challenges such as recruitment and caring for individuals with very complex care needs. Additionally, the current

programme of works on many internal care homes is affecting the number of beds we can offer, with a knock-on effect of people having to stay in hospitals longer and individuals remaining at risk within the community.

In Conwy two homes have closed since the beginning of 2023. An EM residential home closed in February with the loss of 16 beds after being unable to sustain the national standards. A residential home for working age people closed in September with the loss of 5 beds due to the building no longer fit for purpose.

Denbighshire are expecting a home closure by the end of April 2024 due to the lease not being renewed. This will result in the loss of 9 beds.

In Flintshire one home closed in 2022, reducing capacity by a total of 52 beds, comprising of 42 nursing and 10 residential. Following this a second home closed in 2023 reducing capacity by a total of 54 beds, this comprised of 42 nursing and 12 residential.

In Wrexham one home closed in September 2022 with the loss of 33 beds after having been under occupied for a significant period of time due to staffing levels. One home registered for both general nursing and residential closed in February 2023 with the loss of 39 beds and this was due to internal financial management reasons within the registered company.