

Report

Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 8 September 2021

Subject Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2020/2021

Purpose To, present the annual corporate safeguarding report, which monitors, scrutinises and objectively plans on the theme of “*safeguarding*” being fundamentally embedded within all aspects of council services, functions and duties.

To update Cabinet members on the work undertaken to improve arrangements for Safeguarding and protecting children and adults who require specific Council services and to ensure that these arrangements are effective.

Author Head of Corporate Safeguarding
Consultant Social Worker- Safeguarding

Ward ALL

Summary The Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report provides an update on the work undertaken to improve arrangements for Safeguarding and protecting children and adults who require specific Council services and to ensure that these arrangements are effective.

The report was presented to OSMC committee June 2021. The report documents the following:-

- Scrutiny Recommendations (from previous reporting year)
- Internal/ External Audit and Inspection outcomes
- Safeguarding Training Data and outcomes
- Developments this year, including a review of the Corporate Safeguarding Work Plan
- Key data for Safeguarding
- Annual Review of Newport City Council Corporate Safeguarding Self -Assessment Audit (New 2020/21)
- Future Work, Areas of stress/ risk, and Recommendations
- Corporate Safeguarding Work Plan (Current/ Future Year)

Proposal **For Cabinet to accept the Council’s corporate safeguarding work plan for 2021/22 and Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee comments**

Action by Head of Corporate Safeguarding to complete all safeguarding work plan agenda items for 2021/22 in partnership with specific corporate services as identified within the corporate safeguarding self-assessment report.

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of People and Business Change
- Head of Law and Regulation
- Head of Finance
- Director of Social Services
- Cabinet Member for Social Services

Signed

Background

The Annual Safeguarding report 2020/21 provides assurance to the Council that all departments across the Council have clear standards in place to address safeguarding. The introduction of the safeguarding self- assessment audit in 2020 was completed by all departments and evidenced an understanding of *safeguarding involves us all* with regard to policy and practice, environment and the culture of the council. The safeguarding team will provide feedback and support to all service areas to further develop key actions identified within the audit.

The committee have previously been advised of the new and increased number of Quality Standards (Key Performance Indicators) associated with 'Safeguarding' required to be reported to Welsh Government from April 2021 (from 3 indicators increase to 26). As scrutiny of that data remains the responsibility of the committee for the Annual Director's Report for Social Services, a selection of this data has been shared for context purposes when considering how effective safeguarding performance is being achieved within and on behalf of Council services.

The OSMC Committee have scrutinised and reviewed the progress of the work plan for Corporate Safeguarding arrangements for the Council in 2020/2021 and the proposed Corporate plan for 2021/2022.

Report

Throughout the year, immediate safeguarding practice continued to be delivered across all social services for children and adults. These continued to be delivered throughout the restrictions caused by the pandemic, using PPE where required and adherence to all restrictions. The continued pressure on front line services requires resourceful management to ensure we continue to protect and safeguard our most vulnerable citizens and ensure early intervention is available to prevent escalation within families and communities.

The council recognise the impact of the pandemic on the workforce resources and the continued pressure within front-line services to deliver safe and accessible services. It is therefore crucial that we have an informed workforce that recognise safeguarding issues in the community and act accordingly.

The following areas for the attention of the Cabinet were presented to OSMC in June 2021.

Consultation

Scrutiny Committees (June 2021)

Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report

The Committee would like to express their thanks and gratitude to the team, as they understand the difficulty and complexity with the increasing number of Safeguarding Referrals.

The Committee would like better to understand the challenges facing Safeguarding, as the report dealt more with metrics which we cannot compare with other Local Authorities (attached appendix 1)

1. The Council continues to prepare for the change in legislation and practice from Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards to Liberty Protection Safeguards (Mental Capacity Act amendments) which will now occur in 2022. As part of the on-going identified training strategy, both in-house and as part of the wider regional consortium, more training on the new legislation/ practice to increase knowledge and skill will be on-going and is clearly identified both within the Annual Corporate Work plan (2021/2022) and in the specific adult and children's social services priority plans regarding training on new regulations/ legislation.

2. It has been clearly identified through the corporate safeguarding self- assessments that the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Officer (*the person who is responsible for making child/ adult at risk referrals for the team/ department*) needs to be re-clarified and a campaign is needed so that everyone is clear within the Council on who is the DSL/O in their team/ department to report their concerns to. Members should be assured that the DSL/O themselves across the organisation are generally line managers/ team managers, so when an employee reports a concern to them that they would know to make a referral (both due to their line management responsibilities but also due to their training they have received).
3. The Safeguarding Unit, collaboratively with the Social Services Training Department and People and Business Change Department, will continue to progress on the secondary phase of “skill-scanning” of all job descriptions within the council (including volunteers) to ensure that every post is reviewed to ensure that the correct level of safeguarding training and checks required for that role is “assigned” and then can be reviewed by the responsible line manager at the correct intervals. This work is identified on the Work Plan (2021/ 2022).

As highlighted to Members, there is an area of risk to the Council in relation to poor performance for mandatory training where fines/ regulatory action may be taken regarding safeguarding training in particular the Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV Act 2015). Although there have been mitigating factors affecting performance (including the pandemic; access issues for specific service areas) which have been acknowledged by both the Senior Children/ Adult Management Team and Welsh Government to prevent action being taken currently, this on-going low performance and non-compliance is required to be formally addressed.

It is therefore a recommendation to Members that Cabinet endorse the Corporate Safeguarding work plan with specific reference to:-

1. People and Business Change to adopt new ways of working into their priority planning for both new starters to the authority and current employees (including volunteers) in completing mandatory Safeguarding training in order to improve compliance rates.
2. The Welsh Government mandatory training requirement is the Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Act 2015) which requires the Council’s completion of the National Framework for Training for all Council officers, Members and volunteers.
3. Improvement in completion of these mandatory courses will ensure fines or regulatory action are not taken by governing bodies against Newport City Council.

Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

Members are reminded that the work plan (2021/2022) for corporate safeguarding will result in resource and financial commitments across the service areas. The resource strains identified regarding the pressures on service areas where new procedures for safeguarding (LPS) are being implemented from 2022. Although, each service area is already extensively stretched the proposals within the corporate work-plan can be achieved within existing service budgets.

Improvements in the Councils completion of mandatory training of the two specific E learning modules for ‘safeguarding involves us all’ and the Welsh Government mandatory Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2015 (VAWDASV) has no additional financial costs. Face to Face delivery of the training will be resumed by the safeguarding service when restrictions allow.

It is therefore a recommendation to Members that Cabinet endorse the work plan action:-

1. People and Business Change to adopt new ways of working into their priority planning for both new starters to the authority and current employees (including volunteers) in completing mandatory Safeguarding training in order to improve compliance rates.

2. The Welsh Government mandatory training requirement is the Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Act 2015) which requires the Council's completion of the National Framework for Training for all Council officers, Members and volunteers.
3. Improvement in completion of these mandatory courses will ensure fines or regulatory action are not taken by governing bodies against Newport City Council.

Risks

The safeguarding self-assessment audit completed in 2020/21 has provided a strong platform of evidence on how the Council manages safeguarding processes from recruitment across all service areas, to training and professional concerns.

The risks for each area are identified from the evidence in the self-assessment audit completed in 2020/21 and will be quality assured and action plans completed for each service area with safeguarding service to ensure continual improvement in understanding the safeguarding requirements on behalf of the Council.

The annual safeguarding self-assessment audit will enable a tracking of issues and put in place controls to manage risks and identify any immediate risks for the Council to be managed with support from the safeguarding team.

The assurance evidenced within the safe-guarding audit provided a base-line for the Council on how it discharges its '*safeguarding involves us all*' commitment across the Council. This would therefore reduce the level of risk, but it is proposed not to reduce the level of risk on the risk register currently due to the impacts of the pandemic on the workforce and the possible impacts across council services.

Risk Title / Description	Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Risk Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	Risk Owner Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
VAWDASV mandatory training	M	L	<p>Regional level 6 training (senior leadership/Members) developed and to be delivered in Autumn.</p> <p>Regular reminders of mandatory training through staff news.</p> <p>Safeguarding champions in all areas to raise.</p> <p>Self-assessment audit to action plan with specific services.</p> <p>Face to face training to be planned as soon as restrictions allow.</p> <p>Skill scanning with the training department will ensure all areas are clear on their mandatory training and</p>	Head of Corporate safeguarding in conjunction with all Senior Managers across the Council.
Change in Legislation Deprivation of Liberty to Liberty Protection safeguards (Mental Capacity Act)	M	L	<p>Regional training agreed.</p> <p>Processes for transition of legislation locally developed.to update practitioners.</p>	Head of Corporate Safeguarding in partnership with Service Managers in Adult services.

Options Available and considered

To note the Annual Report and to improve Newport City Councils completion of Corporate mandatory Safeguarding training and also the VAWDASV national training framework required by Welsh Government by the following actions:-

1. People and Business services continue to adopt new ways of working into their priority planning for both new starters to the authority and current employees (including volunteers) in completing mandatory Safeguarding training in order to improve compliance rates.
The Welsh Government mandatory training requirement is the Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Act 2015) which requires the Council's completion of the National Framework for Training for all Council officers, Members and volunteers.
Annual safeguarding self-assessment will provide an audit process for all service areas.
Improvement in completion of these mandatory courses will ensure no fines or regulatory action.
2. Provide information through the training directory only.

Preferred Option and Why

Proposal 1. Will ensure the Council further embeds safeguarding awareness as a cornerstone of working and providing services on behalf of Newport City Council. The audit will provide a reference point for areas that require improvement and support to fulfil the mandatory requirement. All service areas will have enhanced awareness and provide additional safeguards across the community and internally with colleagues

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

The Cabinet and Safeguarding report confirms there are no cost implications as the identified action plans will be implemented from existing resources.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report. The Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report sets out how the Council is discharging its statutory safeguarding duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and how these corporate responsibilities have been embedded throughout the organisation, in relation to the delivery of all services and functions. The Annual Report sets out the progress made to date in delivering key actions and priorities for corporate safeguarding in relation to children and vulnerable adults in accordance with the annual Corporate Safeguarding Plan. The Report draws attention to issues relating to the new Liberty Protection Safeguards and procedures, the need for designated safeguarding leads/officers and the review of job descriptions to identify safeguarding training needs and responsibilities. The Report also identifies an area of risk in relation to VAWDASV training and recommendations regarding the roll-out of this mandatory training in order to avoid any sanctions.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

Effective safeguarding arrangements are a vital part of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of local people in the course of the Council's business. A corporate approach to safeguarding ensures clear and consistent procedures are in place so that council employees can recognise signs and dangers and will then act appropriately. The Corporate Safeguarding Report provides for openness and accountability and allows the Scrutiny Committee to have an overview role of the Council's safeguarding arrangements and activities.

There are no direct human resources implications to this report other than the rollout of the mandatory training on safeguarding and VAWDASV.

Scrutiny Committees (June 2021)

The OSMC Committee have scrutinised and reviewed the progress of the work plan for Corporate Safeguarding arrangements for the Council in 2020/2021 and the proposed corporate plan for 2021/22.

The Committee expressed their thanks and gratitude to the team, as they understand the difficulty and complexity with increasing number of Safeguarding Referrals.

The Committee would like better to understand the challenges facing Safeguarding, as the report dealt more with metrics which we cannot compare with other Local Authorities.

The Committee welcomed a streamlined approach in the document however noted their concerns on the constantly changing performance indicators. It was acknowledged that the same would not be published until June 2022, so the Scrutiny Committee commented that they would not be able to advise without knowing how they can help to improve the current safeguarding issues. Therefore, the committee asked;

A) For assurance that those who need help are being prioritised and if the team have any concerns on the direction of the way things are going.

B) If the structure of Newport safeguarding team is appropriate to meet the safeguarding matters.

In response, the Head of Safeguarding explained that there is a constant issue in how much detail they can divulge and to also keep the assurance at a high level for the council. They work closely with adults and children so when the team have issues they are addressed both formally and very quickly. Immediate safeguarding has been attended to for the children apart from April 2020 when referrals reduced while everyone adjusted to working remotely.

The members were advised that the safeguarding team receive referrals through a range of avenues and the issues they had were due to mainly schools being closed as the access to schools is a big safeguarding benchmark.

The team worked with education regarding vulnerable children and young people were better protected through keeping the services going. The team was mindful of what was going on outside of schools. It was noted that there was an influx of referrals because currently there are more eyes on vulnerable people.

The officer stressed that the report will be different as the pressures that the safeguarding team are facing currently, are very different to the ones from March in 2020, however despite this, the members were informed that this was very well managed.

The Head of Service stressed that they shared the committee's frustration regarding the details of the data. Welsh Government changes to the guidelines were frustrating for performance management however the officer remains optimistic as new guidelines provided a clear picture of what was expected of the team and the requirements for submitting to the regional safeguarding board in future. Members were advised that the team will be finally approaching clarity from that.

In terms of assurance, from February 2020 onwards there was an immediate risk to any sort of vulnerability as it is an outward facing service, there was not a drop off in service as social workers were still out working. Staff were provided with PPE and were vaccinated early within the programme. The lead officer then advised members that within the children services department, they have a young workforce who are confident in IT and have a lower risk from COVID so they were lucky enough to not completely halt services. It was stressed that the pressure on their staff had been substantial. Whilst the staff held the fort really well, the team had an assurance check from Care Inspectorate Wales with no concerns raised in terms of direct practice. Despite this, it is important to acknowledge that the staff are

tired and due to the pandemic it is more than just the numbers of referrals. Members were informed that the referrals are much more complex and challenging for the staff in terms of knowledge base and skills with referrals they would not usually see. For instance, for children as nobody had sight of them during lockdown periods i.e. health visitor checking in at schools. Referrals are also coming through much later with children coming out from longer periods of neglect. The committee was advised that this has a profound impact on the children in terms of development in physical and mental well-being therefore the department will be dealing with more complex issues for a while. For both services, the team delivered throughout the pandemic. The staff responded extremely well to the issues in terms of transparency and decision making, and the officer thanked Cllr Cockeram for his help. The whole team worked collaboratively but acknowledged that they are heading into a more difficult period with the knock on effects of the pandemic and could do with a circuit break but they cannot stop servicing those in need. ☐

The Committee thanked the safeguarding team for their huge efforts over the last 18 months which must have been incredible tough, their work behind the scenes and honest appraisals were fully appreciated. Members queried whether the team had any recommendations to Cabinet that might be helpful to them for the future issues.

The Head of Service confirmed that their main issue is one of resourcing, but that they had voiced these issues already and that Cabinet are aware. They appreciated the thanks and said they would pass it on to their team.

Members enquired whether the resource discussion is an underlying issue for the team and how the same is affecting staff training, they acknowledged that the younger staff were mentioned earlier for help.

The Head of Service responded by stating that the youth of their staff was a help as the nature of social care tends to be a young workforce. Therefore, the turnover is reasonable with low rates of agency staff, noting that the area has one agency worker. The lead officer explained that both they and the Head of Safeguarding proudly sponsor a student who just recently got a first in their degree and who will be staying with the team. It was highlighted that they are able to support students through social work training and it is just as important to help them stay. The service area does have vacancies, not as many as other authorities however they argued that they are in a good position compared to a larger authority and have permanent staff which is more beneficial for many reasons.

It was explained that social workers have to undertake ongoing training in order to maintain registration so much of this was done online but however some could not be done virtually such as residential staff and elements of first aid training.

The Head of Service pointed out a positive of the team running an event from early in June for early year children conference with 150 in attendance. It was encouraging to have individuals embracing looking at new developments and mentioned that work with the children protection team and staff supported the changed and continued to develop and adapt.

Members were informed that the staff are concerned about the lack of resources and given the weight of referrals, it has impacted training but the lead officer assured that they are trying to address that in the coming year, workload-wise and how to balance it.

Another element of this issue is trying to ensure that resources are in the right place, there is a long discussion in place about who else the team could bring in to undertake assessments and use resources appropriately. The other national issue is with social work, this occupation has been challenged across the United Kingdom as they continually have to work hard to retain their staff.

The Committee referred to page 15 of the report and mentioned from the increase in referrals that seem consistent throughout the year of 2021, it does not look like there would be any likelihood of it easing off. Members acknowledged that during the time of school closures, there was a suppression of referrals so voiced their concerns that cases of neglect are being picked up later than they would have been. From this increase in difficulties, the committee queried what aspect of the pandemic is causing this.

In response, the Head of Safeguarding explained that it seems to be from a combination of financial issues/stress/community support/job losses. They have not had the same amount of eyes in the community i.e. health visitors, immunisations for young children; and families became less visible with the severe neglect cases that the council did not know about a year ago. Issues which have gone unreported for the past year are more difficult to deal with, as the cases are more entrenched when caught at a later date.

The officer mentioned that we have all experienced loss in a way, due to illness or loss of opportunities and the team acknowledged that the most vulnerable of our society have experienced this the most. The restrictions put in place to keep people safe have taken a heavy toll on families and the support for them. In April 2020, the officer explained that there was a dip in referrals but they have since increased. The team usually dread weeks after the school holidays or just before the pupils go on summer holiday.

Members were advised that there were two issues that the safeguarding team deal with, the loss and the emotional wellbeing and impact it has had on the adult services and also the emotional wellbeing and ill health in children. The stresses have been seen throughout on children in this area and the toll it has also taken with adults, for example they have seen increased episodes of hoarding and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

The Lead Officer indicated that they have seen a sharp increase in domestic abuse reports. All of these things compounded, and there has been an increase in children in families as victims of domestic abuse.

It was added that there had been an increase in sibling abuse also due to the stress of elder children being locked inside and also with relatively young adults living with parents, there has been a rise in domestic abuse of older children on their parents.

The Head of Service noted that we can see across the country, in reports of the press that the weakest have suffered the most from this and the ones with the least resources are hit first and the hardest.

The Committee gave their thanks to the officers for the report and their presentations and agreed to accept the report.

An enhanced Council safeguarding vulnerable citizens.

This proposal directly enhances safeguarding awareness and responsibility across the Council within all corporate services. The Council safeguarding statement clearly sets out the expectations on all who deliver services on behalf of the Council;

“Newport City Council expects all employees to take reasonable steps to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of the children and adults they may come into contact with is upheld and that all employees (paid or voluntary) recognise and respond to their duty of care to objectives. to be responsible.

All Council plans including the Corporate plan, the improvement plan, Strategic Well-Being and future generations plan, Strategic director for people plan and service area plans with Social Services all include ensuring we deliver a safe and inclusive community for the citizens of Newport.

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- The importance of having a workforce that are up to date with all mandatory safeguarding training courses and the role there services have in the identification of safeguarding issues ensure the community is strong and resilient.
- The Social Services and Well-Being Act (2014) ensures that the prevention element that is required within the legislation supports communities to access early intervention for support and not escalate to statutory services.

- **Integration:** An informed workforce with clear understanding of safeguarding responsibilities while in the community will assist in achieving our wellbeing objectives, and wellbeing goals. The enhanced Safeguarding multi agency Hub with co-located partners achieves integration and improved communication with all public bodies with safeguarding responsibilities, this incorporated early intervention through to statutory enquiries and interventions to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.
- **Collaboration:** The self-assessment safeguarding audit provided a baseline platform across all service areas that evidenced the key element of collaboration within Council services and safeguarding partners can only be achieved through strong communication to achieve our wellbeing objectives.
- **Involvement:** The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the City we serve.

- **Equality Act 2010 and Socio Economic Duty**

This report does not reflect a policy change or decision which would impact disproportionately on staff or communities because of protected characteristics or inequalities arising as a result of socio-economic disadvantage. Therefore, a formal Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However, fairness and equality are considered in service delivery across all council services.

- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

Training and information will be provided through the medium of Welsh.

Background Papers

- Appendix 1 Full annual safeguarding report available to all Members
- Appendix 2 Safeguarding self-assessment audit template. (Available to the public)
- Appendix 3 Ending Physical Punishment: 7 minute briefing (Available to the public)

Appendix 1



Annual Corporate
Safeguarding Report

Appendix 2



Newport City
Council Corporate S

Appendix 3



Ending Physical
Punishment in Wales

The above have been included as print outs in the Agenda Report pack.

Dated: 20 August 2021