

Report

Council

Part 1

Date: 24 January 2023

Subject Annual Safeguarding Report (Interim) of the Head of Corporate Safeguarding

Purpose To present the Annual Safeguarding Report (interim) to Cabinet

Author Head of Corporate Safeguarding

Ward City Wide

Summary This report is the Head of Corporate Safeguarding's evaluation of 2020/21 performance for the Local Authority. This Corporate Safeguarding Policy provides a framework for every Service within the Council setting out responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk. It lays out the methods by which the Council will be assured that it is fulfilling its duties and that effective practices are in place to support individuals to live their life free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Proposal To receive the Annual Safeguarding Report (interim) by the Head of Corporate Safeguarding

Action by Head of Corporate Safeguarding

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Social Services staff
- Cabinet Member for Social Services
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of Finance
- Head of People and Business Change

Signed

Background

This is the fifth review of the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report. Further revisions to the format and data presented within this annual report have been made and it is anticipated that due to further work with partner agencies such as the Gwent Safeguarding Board. There is a new Head of Corporate Safeguarding. This role falls under the management of the Director of Social Services.

The Annual Safeguarding report demonstrates how Newport City Council will meet its obligations towards the safeguarding of children and adults at risk. It also gives assurances to the public, councillors, employees, volunteers and people carrying out work on behalf of the Council that there are sound arrangements in place to safeguard children and adults at risk.

Head of Corporate Safeguarding's Summary of Performance

- The report is an interim report of the Annual Corp SG report, previously presented to Scrutiny. The reporting cycle for this report has been postponed due to changing scrutiny cycles and the recruitment of a new Head of Corporate Safeguarding. Respecting the wishes of the committee to provide only streamlined and targeted information, revisions to the format and data presented have been made to this interim report and it is anticipated that due to further work with partner agencies such as the Gwent Safeguarding Board and advice from Welsh Government, a final version of the report model presented for Scrutiny will be agreed within the next two years.
- Overall, the Local Authority is compliant and meeting its duties regarding Safeguarding practices for children and adults. It is acknowledged that services are still feeling the effects post-pandemic and referrals into HUB and First Contact Team remain high (with a 13.9% increase to the children's HUB in the last year alone), however, despite these increases we have been generally effective in implementing the right decision or "right service" at the right time for both children and adults via preventative service or early intervention pathways at the 'front door' where ever possible through these new models and ways of working when Newport were the Pilot for such practices. Regionally, these models of practice (Multi agency Hubs/ Prevention step-up down processes/ Education collaborations) are now being adopted and implemented.
- It is acknowledged that the authority as a whole still has some way to go to improve in terms of mandatory training compliance targets, particularly when benchmarking to other LA's and partner agencies specifically for VAWDASV compliance, which carries Welsh Government non-compliance fines. The continued low compliance for mandatory safeguarding training courses by employees (including volunteers and elected members) is a matter which must be urgently addressed to ensure that completion of courses is undertaken and failure to do so is met with necessary employee conduct action to prevent Council compliance notices or fines being issued. It is of course accepted that face to face training has been unavailable due to the Covid pandemic for a long period of time which has significantly contributed to uptake of some courses however, this should no longer be causing barrier/ delay issues from this point moving forward in the 2022/2023 action plan.
- We are asking members to be aware that the RAG status for the Volunteer Policy and F2F training commencing September 2022 are not accurate but are due imminently. We are asking that the actions for future work are endorsed and those outstanding are rolled over with the appropriate prioritisation given to the work around mandatory training compliance; governance and recording of safeguarding data for more effective benchmarking and reporting (including developing a more robust self-assessment tool which is regionally aligned; WCCIS reporting of service area referrals from DSP's); Safeguarding Training Framework development project to be relaunched; and a newly devised "Safeguarding, Young People Web Information Project" beyond the current safeguarding webpage to be considered by CSMT beyond the action plan of annual Corporate Safeguarding.
- Align this work with the new Corporate plan for (2022-2027) This will dovetail the principles of the Corporate plan with the Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities outlined and ensure that Safeguarding is everyone's business

Recommendations to the Cabinet

The Cabinet is asked to:

1. Consider the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Executive Summary report, to scrutinise and review the progress of the key priority work plans for both corporate safeguarding arrangements and the safeguarding self- assessment findings for the whole Council.
2. Determine if it wishes to make any comment / recommendations to Cabinet regarding the report and the how the Council is managing corporate safeguarding Board and advice from Welsh Government, a final version of the report model presented for Scrutiny will be agreed within the next two years.
3. In order for the authority to comply with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, change to culture and practice has been required. This has seen a move toward social care that 'promotes the wellbeing of people and carers who need care and/or support'.

Whilst the Social Services Directorate lead on dealing with enquires regarding concerns that individuals may be at risk of harm, everyone has a responsibility to safeguard the well-being of adults and children who may be at risk whatever their role. The Corporate Safeguarding policy covers all functions and services of the Council and applies to all Council employees, elected members, foster carers, individuals undertaking work placements, volunteers and anyone carrying out work on behalf of the Council, including independent contractors.

The Council also has a duty to ensure that other organisations commissioned to provide services on their behalf have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the well-being of adults and children.

The Council will work to safeguard children and adults at risk in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 which defines:

A child at risk is a child who is experiencing or at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm and;

- Has needs for care and support whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs.
- An adult at risk is an adult who is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect and;
- Has needs for care and support whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs and;
- As a result of those needs is unable to protect him or herself against the abuse or neglect or risk of it.

Related legislation, policy and guidance

Legislation which is contained within the various Acts and guidance that are identified below enshrine the right to protection from abuse. The legal starting point in achieving this objective is professionals' duty to report allegations of abuse and neglect.

The law also identifies the Local Authority as the lead organisation in making enquiries to identify whether an individual is at risk and in coordinating the response to protect. In practice this is never achieved in isolation or without clear leadership and accountability for the work which is equally set out in law, along with the duty to cooperate and collaborate with others.

The Council recognises that good practice in safeguarding brings together all activity aimed at promoting safe practice with vulnerable groups and preventing abuse and neglect. For this reason, and because the law, policy, guidance and regulations change from time to time, it is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of relevant documents but the most significant items are below:

- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Education Act 2002 – plus "Keeping Learners Safe 201" – The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- Housing Act 2004
- Licensing Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998

The Council will ensure that practice is compliant with the following policies and procedures:

- Wales Safeguarding Procedures
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 - codes of practice and guidance
- Newport City Council’s Whistleblowing Policy
- Newport City Council’s Recruitment Policies, which includes Safe Recruitment Policies and Safeguarding in Employment Guidance
- Employees, and councillors should also act in accordance with the relevant professional Code of Conduct.

The intention is that this Corporate Safeguarding Policy will supplement and not replace any responsibilities already set out in legislation, policy or guidance set out above.

Strategic context

At a strategic level, this approach to safeguarding supports the delivery of the Council’s three wellbeing objectives as set out within the Corporate Plan 2019-2022

At an All-Wales level, keeping people safe contributes to the Wellbeing goals set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales.

Governance

The Council will discharge its strategic statutory safeguarding responsibilities through Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) and Safeguarding Champions in each Council Directorate. These identified individuals will represent their Directorate at the Corporate Safeguarding Champions biannual meeting and act as a conduit for the dissemination of safeguarding information from the Head or Corporate Safeguarding.

In this section you must set out all necessary information to allow Councillors to take an informed decision. You will need to put forward the case to support your proposals.

Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

There are no financial considerations for this workstream

- The costs and financial implications:

	Year 1 (Current) £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £	Ongoing £	Notes including budgets heads affected
Costs (Income)					
Net Costs (Savings)					
Net Impact on Budget					

Risks

It is important to identify and manage any project or scheme’s exposure to risk and have in place controls to deal with those risks.

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?
Pressure on the Delivery of Children Services	H	M	Ongoing efficiency management Ongoing recruitment	Head of Children's Services
Pressure on Adult & Community Services	H	M	Ongoing efficiency management Ongoing recruitment	Head of Adult's Services
Safeguarding – inherent risk	M	M	Training and awareness raising to all staff	Head of Corporate Safeguarding

* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Newport City Council's Corporate Plan 2022 -27

Options Available and considered

Option 1 - Cabinet endorses the Interim Report of the Head of Corporate Safeguarding 2021/22

Option 2 – Cabinet does not endorse Interim Report of the Head of Corporate Safeguarding 2021/22 and sets out specific reasons and recommendations for action.

Preferred Option and Why

Option 1 as the Annual Safeguarding Report of the Head of Corporate Safeguarding is a statutory requirement whereby the Head of Corporate Safeguarding provides their assessment of performance to the Council.

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, which simply provides an interim update for Cabinet on the progress made in implementing the arrangements for corporate safeguarding in relation to children and vulnerable adults in accordance with the annual Corporate Safeguarding Plan. The Report confirms that the Council is compliant and is meeting its statutory safeguarding duties under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. However, the interim report identifies those areas which are still in need of further improvement, including the need for further mandatory VAWDASV training.

Comments of Head People Policy and Transformation

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 presented to Scrutiny in September provides for openness and accountability and allows Scrutiny 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 to note the rollout of the mandatory training on safeguarding and VAWDASV and that non-compliance remains an issue to be addressed.

Scrutiny Committees

Scrutiny committee on the 30th September noted the following recommendations

- The Committee welcomed the report and thanked Officers for their hard work. Members wanted it recognised that they appreciate that this specific area of work is extremely difficult.
- The Committee were pleased to note that the Service Area listened to the comments and recommendations that were made in last year's meeting and made the appropriate amendments.
- The Committee felt that more specific data was needed throughout the report to contextualise information given, such as percentages so Members can have a clearer picture of comparison. Members also queried if it could be possible to find out in the percentages of how many children in the figures are the same child being safeguarded, and how many are single incident children.
- The Committee asked that the area of focus regarding whether "the structure for the Newport Safeguarding Unit Structure and Individual Teams Key Priority Plans is appropriate to meet the Council's responsibilities for safeguarding matters" be removed as it was outside of the Committee's expertise. (This is more so an action for Scrutiny to not include in future cover reports but wanted to make you aware that the Committee wanted it noted).
- The Committee asked for an update regarding training progress be given to committee including more specific data to contextualise any information given, such as percentages to how many staff members have completed the training. Members also queried if it would be possible to have update on figures such as training and referrals received, on a half yearly basis,

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

- The importance of having a workforce up to date with all mandatory training courses and understanding the role and influence their services have in the ongoing work to 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 that offers advice and assistance to maintain independence, improve well being and prevent unnecessary escalation to statutory services. To ensure that professionals know their statutory duty to identify and report concerns is central to this.
- Integration: The ongoing work to in an integrated way with partners to ensure that we are all meeting our collective safeguarding responsibilities.
- Collaboration: The ongoing work with partners, specialist providers, independent, third sector and nationals who have rallied together throughout the Pandemic to ensure support continues to be available. Supported by the Local Authority in terms of co-ordination of services and distribution of Welsh Government funding to ensure they remain sustainable and responsive to changing needs.
- 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.

Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

The service area is mandated by Welsh Government to collect data around this measure to illustrate and monitor need. Information is contained within the report.

Consultation

There have been two bespoke online safeguarding sessions delivered to elected members in 2022 in addition to the mandatory safeguarding training that all staff must attend.

Background Papers

Interim Corporate Safeguarding Report 2022

Dated: 17 January 2023