



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23RD FEBRUARY 2021

**LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS TO
SAFEGUARD CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY &
CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO
HOLDER, CLLR MORGAN**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an overview of the work undertaken to deliver the improvement actions set out by the Wales Audit Office (Audit Wales) in relation to the Council's Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities.
- Set out the further actions that require attention.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Reviews the progress made against the improvement actions to support Corporate Safeguarding requirements and requests further information on any areas where this is deemed insufficient.
- 2.2 Agrees that a further update will be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Safeguarding is the responsibility of everybody. All staff, volunteers, Councillors and those contracted to deliver work and services on behalf of the Council should have the ability to identify what constitutes a potential safeguarding issue and how they can raise a concern.

3.2 The update provided within this report sets out the progress made in respect of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements in the last 12 months.

4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1 Councillors, staff, volunteers and providers who work for or on behalf of the Council have a responsibility for protecting children, young people and adults at risk from abuse and/or neglect. This also involves preventing them from becoming at risk of abuse and/or neglect.

4.2 The Council's responsibilities for Corporate Safeguarding add to and complement the work of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board, which is the multi-agency statutory partnership that has the responsibility for safeguarding across the region. Each agency must ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place to safeguard children and adults at risk.

4.3 The development of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, which included a programme of accountability, policy development, training and communication, was set out in a report to Cabinet on the 17th March 2016 following consideration of Wales Audit Office [Review of Corporate Safeguarding arrangements in Wales](#). At this meeting, Cabinet also adopted the original Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

4.4 Since then, the Council has taken steps to strengthen its Corporate Safeguarding arrangements. This work has been reflected in various reports including Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees, Audit Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board including:

- [Audit Committee 20/3/16](#) reviewed arrangements to support safeguarding children and determined there were no matters of governance, internal control or a risk management nature that required further action or attention.
- [Corporate Parenting Board 11/4/16](#) noted the progress to date and the need to continually raise awareness of individual's responsibilities in respect of safeguarding.
- [Audit Committee 20 March 2017](#) was satisfied with the progress that has been made in relation to the steps taken by the Council to monitor the implementation of 'proposals for improvement' by the WAO.
- [Children and Young People Scrutiny 22 March 2017](#) resolved to receive update reports at future meetings
- [Children and Young People Scrutiny 6 September 2017](#) received annual report of Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board
- [Overview and Scrutiny 14 November 2017](#) received a presentation of progress to date.
- [Children and Young People Scrutiny 12 September 2018](#) received the annual report of Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board
- [Overview and Scrutiny Committee 5 February 2019](#) – received an update and next steps in respect of Corporate Safeguarding.

- 4.5 A follow up review of the Council's corporate arrangements for safeguarding of children was carried out by the Wales Audit Office in 2019. Overall, the findings set out in the [WAO report](#) issued in September 2019, found that the Council had met, or partially met, most of the previous recommendations and proposals for improvement. However, some further proposals for improvement were made to strengthen aspects of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.
- 4.6 In summary, the six Proposals for Improvement were that the Council should:
- Strengthen the Corporate Safeguarding Policy
 - Strengthen the recruitment and selection procedures
 - Gather contractual monitoring information from across all Council directorates
 - Should improve its approach to safeguarding training
 - Consider producing performance measures (for example in respect of DBS check compliance) to enhance the performance information that goes to scrutiny and aid transparency and that
 - The Corporate Safeguarding Working Group should have oversight of corporate safeguarding risks from across the Council.
- 4.7 An Improvement Action Plan was developed to oversee the implementation of these Proposals for Improvement. Progress in implementing this plan has been monitored over the past year by the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group.
- 4.8 A report to [Cabinet on 28 July 2020](#) sought approval of this Action Plan, along with a revised [Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#).

5 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Progress in relation to each of the recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office is set out below:
- 5.2 Proposal for Improvement 1: Strengthen the Corporate Safeguarding Policy

A revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy (see above) was approved by Cabinet in July 2020, and has since been translated, posted to the Council's website and a link shared with all staff. Posters, raising awareness of the Policy, have been produced for placement in Council buildings when it is safe to do so and to share with external providers.

This revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy provides more detailed information on wider safeguarding concerns, such as child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and counter terrorism. It also clarifies the role of the Corporate Safeguarding Group and sets out the roles and responsibilities of every person to whom the Corporate Safeguarding Policy applies.

- 5.3 Proposal for Improvement 2: Strengthen the Recruitment and Selection Procedures
- 5.4 Recruitment processes have been amended to reflect the WAO recommendations. This includes making a clear commitment to safeguarding, ensuring that all relevant job descriptions and job adverts refer to safeguarding and the requirement for a full DBS check. A recent audit of a sample of Job Descriptions found that these were compliant with these requirements.
- 5.5 Proposal for Improvement 3: Contractual Monitoring Arrangements to robustly monitor safeguarding related actions
- 5.6 An extensive piece of work was undertaken to review the Council's Contracts Register and identify those contracts where safeguarding would apply. However, it became apparent that it was difficult to filter out specific contracts, as many could be in environments where staff could observe something and need to know how to report it. It was therefore agreed that staff employed across all of our contracts should be able to identify and know where to report potential concerns.
- 5.7 A letter and poster was sent out to all suppliers and contractors in January 2021 advising them of their safeguarding responsibilities, as required by the Council's Safeguarding Policy.
- 5.8 Monitoring arrangements are currently in development whereby service areas will be asked to select a sample of contracts each year to assess whether safeguarding responsibilities are being adhered to.
- 5.9 In addition, all Social Care contracts include specific obligations for providers in relation to their safeguarding responsibilities. These are closely monitored by Social Services Commissioning Teams.
- 5.10 Proposal for Improvement 4: Improve the approach to Safeguarding Training
- 5.11 The Council has in place ongoing safeguarding training and awareness-raising sessions for Councillors and staff. Plans are in place to roll out refresher Level 1 training across the Council in 2021.
- 5.12 A Cross-Council Working group was set up in January 2020 to strengthen the training compliance for both Safeguarding and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. This group has drafted a Safeguarding Training Competency Framework and an associated action plan which details the levels of safeguarding knowledge expected of staff groups (Levels 1 to 5). This work is expected to be completed in 2021.
- 5.13 Work has also been ongoing to support service areas with harder to reach employees to address induction and training compliance issues. A training pilot, utilising ICT equipment, was set up for Catering, Cleansing and School Crossing Patrol service teams. In February 2020, 22 tablets were shared across the three service areas to provide training, including the mandatory and induction elements.

- 5.14 In May/June 2020, the Council's Licensing Department carried out awareness raising sessions amongst the taxi trade of the need to spot the signs of County Lines abuse. The licensing authority is changing the qualification that needs to be attained by any new driver to that of a SQA Level 2 Certificate in an Introduction to the Role of the Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver. This new qualification has a heightened focus on safeguarding. All new drivers sit a qualification called an SQA (Scottish Qualification Authority) 'Introduction to the Role of the Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver', which covers safeguarding and has replaced the previous BTEC qualification.
- 5.15 In March 2020, a safeguarding presentation was held within Pub-watch schemes in Pontypridd and Aberdare on spotting the signs of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 5.16 The numbers of staff who have undertaken Level 1 Safeguarding Training are included in the tables below. This includes training carried out by the Council's Social Care Workforce Development department. Face to face training has reduced during 2020 due to the pandemic, which has meant that e-learning via the RCT Source has dramatically increased.

	2019	2020
Total no. staff	10,629	10,854
Current no. of staff trained	6,450	7,484
Training method used:		
Face to Face	4,631	4,625
E-Learning	1,819	2,859

- 5.17 Proposal for Improvement 5: Produce performance measures to enhance the performance information that is presented to Scrutiny Committee
- 5.18 The Corporate Safeguarding Group has agreed the following performance measures:

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	DATA/COMMENTS
%/No of staff trained in Corporate Safeguarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic Level - Management Level %/No of new staff completing mandatory Safeguarding induction training within 6 months	69% (7,484) of 10,854 staff completed training as at the end of November 2020 (see table above). Also, 54% of new starters from 1st Sept 2020 to 9th February 2021 have completed on-line learning.
%/No of people who are aware of their responsibilities in respect of	As above – roles, responsibilities and reporting of issues are covered as part of the online training and within

safeguarding (data to be sourced from staff survey) %/No of people who found it easy to access information if they had reason to report	the corporate safeguarding policy (which is included with on the e-learning page on the Source)
%/No of DBS checks carried out	1,797 DBS checks carried out from January to December 2020, 580 of which was COVID-related recruitment.
%/No of taxi drivers completing training	200 of the 484 drivers have gained the BTEC qualification.

5.19 The following additional measures will be implemented when circumstances allow:

- New PI in respect of Contract Monitoring action in line with Improvement Action 3
- New PI in respect of training for the night time economy in line with action Improvement Action 4

5.20 Measures of success will include positive feedback from the next Audit review.

Extract from WAO Report 2019

Overall, we found that: The Council has met, or partially met, most of our previous recommendations and proposals for improvement, but we have identified some further proposals for improvement to strengthen aspects of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements.

5.21 It has also been proposed that the number and source of safeguarding referrals from staff and Councillors is recorded. This may indicate an improved awareness of the reporting requirements. The figures for January to December 2020 are provided below. These will be used as benchmarking data going forward:

Adult Safeguarding Referrals
Source of Referral Jan - Dec 2020

Staff of Social Services	377
Independent Care Homes	145
Independent Domiciliary Care Agencies	119
Councillor	2

Children's Services Contacts Received
Source of Contact Jan - Dec 2020

Schools	1697
Staff of Social Services	1111
Independent Sector/Other Agency	629
Councillor	3
Advocate	52

5.22 Proposal for Improvement 6: Oversight of Corporate Safeguarding Risks across the Council

5.23 A review of all risks contained within the Council's Service Delivery Plans was completed in 2020. These risks were considered by the Corporate Safeguarding Strategic Group and deemed to be appropriate. The regular and well-embedded Performance Management arrangements requiring annual Service Delivery Plans to be in place have been overtaken by COVID-19 events. The arrangements for Delivery Planning for 2020/21 were suspended due to the need to put in place immediate and agile responses and recovery and contingency planning in order to keep people safe, with priority afforded to vulnerable people and those at most risk. In the meantime, the Senior Leadership Team and the Council's Cabinet are regularly reviewing ongoing work to mitigate and manage the Council's strategic risks set out in the Strategic Risk Register, which includes the coronavirus.

5.24 Once the operational Performance Management arrangements resume, operational service risks will be considered by the Corporate Safeguarding Group.

6. FURTHER WORK

6.1 In addition to the continuation of the core priorities of the Corporate Safeguarding Group, the work plan has been updated to include the following areas of work. Relevant updates will be provided via the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board:

6.2 Suicide Prevention - there has been an increasing number of suicides in the area, particularly in the Rhondda area. The need for a regional, co-ordinated approach to tackle this issue has been identified. New regional governance arrangements have been established and a single multi-agency strategy has been drafted.

6.3 Child Sexual Abuse and Contextual Safeguarding - the Welsh Government's National Action Plan for Child Sexual Abuse (2019-2021) states that corporate safeguarding has a core role in ensuring that adequate measures are in place to keep children safe. Alongside this, there is the need to be aware of the principles involved in Contextual Safeguarding, which recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. This involves looking beyond the child's home when assessing for and planning child protection interventions.

6.4 The Welsh Government plans to develop an exemplar Corporate Safeguarding Policy to inform improvements and consistency in local and regional arrangements.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 No specific consultation required at this time.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

9.1 Additional costs are likely given the scale and depth of training required, but these can be met from within existing resources.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 Extracted from the Corporate Safeguarding Policy:

- Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014
- Education Act 2002 – plus ‘Keeping Learners Safe’ -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

11 LINKS TO THE COUNCIL’ S CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

Safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk is a key priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and ***‘is everyone’s business’***. Further, by keeping our residents, both young and old, safe, the Council is contributing to a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales and one of more cohesive communities.

11.1 The Council’s Corporate Safeguarding arrangements support the ‘PEOPLE’ priority of the Council’s [Corporate Plan](#), particularly “... *Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities to remain independent and have a good quality of*

life...and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.”

12 CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The Council continues to make progress in delivering its Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities as evidenced by the information provided in this report and the ongoing nature of the actions being delivered.
