



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**29 JANUARY 2024**

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

#### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**AUTHOR: Paul Mee**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The Purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the work undertaken by the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group and to request elected Members to scrutinise and comment on the new draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the Council's corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children and adults at risk including the new draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy, and
- 2.2 Scrutinise the new Delivery Plan for 2023-25 and progress to quarter 2, and
- 2.3 Request the Service Director for Democratic Services & Communications to provide Cabinet with the feedback of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in respect of the new draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The safeguarding of children and adults at risk is a priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, whether they work for, or on behalf of, the Council. Everyone should have the ability to identify what constitutes a potential safeguarding issue and know how to raise a concern.

- 3.2 It is essential that Members are confident that there are effective safeguarding arrangements in place across the Council, and that our corporate policy and governance is robust.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Council adopted its current Corporate Safeguarding Policy at the meeting of Cabinet on [28<sup>th</sup> July 2020](#). This policy provides a framework setting out how we can be assured that we are fulfilling our duties to safeguard the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.2 A Corporate Safeguarding Group, chaired by the Chief Executive, is responsible for ensuring that the Council carries out its responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, as set out in its Corporate Safeguarding Policy.
- 4.3 The Group ensures that robust arrangements for safeguarding are in place across the Council. This includes seeking assurances that the Council has effective performance management processes in place to fulfil its duties corporately and in partnership with other statutory agencies.
- 4.4 The Council's responsibilities for Corporate Safeguarding add to and complement the work of the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional 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.
- 4.5 A significant focus of work during the last 6 months has been the review of the current Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

#### **5 THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

- 5.1 The Council's corporate safeguarding policy is subject to review every three years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and to reflect developments in legislation or best practice.
- 5.2 The policy has been reviewed against the [Welsh Government and WLGA Corporate Safeguarding Good Practice Guide](#) and reflects input on current safeguarding best practice from professionals working across the Council, including Children's Services, Adult Services, Human Resources, Procurement, Digital & ICT and others.
- 5.3 Arising from the review above, we have revised and strengthened our arrangements in a new draft policy set out in Appendix 1 for Member's consideration. The main changes to the policy are as follows:
- The corporate safeguarding framework has been revised to reflect good practice and now has four refreshed principal areas of focus:

- **Leadership & Culture** – a clear articulation of who this policy applies to and that leadership for safeguarding sits at the highest possible level with the Council's Leader and Chief Executive.
- **Governance, Scrutiny & Performance Management** – robust governance through the Corporate Safeguarding Group, chaired by the Chief Executive, robust challenge and scrutiny through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, underpinned by a performance management framework and annual delivery planning cycle.
- **Professional Practice & Service Standards** – a clear articulation of expectations in relation to professional practice in relation to those working with children and adults at risk and the duty to report that applies to all employees, elected members and those working on behalf of the Council.
- Service specific safeguarding considerations around licensing, planning, schools and education, procurement, digital and ICT, and partnerships.
- **Workforce, Recruitment & Selection** – clarity of requirements for mandatory training in compliance with the national safeguarding training, learning and development standards and recruitment processes that prevent unsuitable persons from working for the Council.

5.4 The policy also includes important information on what to do if a member of staff or Councillor suspects someone is at risk; a revised description of what constitutes abuse and/or exploitation to reflect current professional thinking; reference to an updated list of related Council policies, and a description of roles and responsibilities.

## **6 THE CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING DELIVERY PLAN FOR 2023-2025**

6.1 A new Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2025 has been developed by the Corporate Safeguarding Group. The Delivery Plan reflects how the Corporate Safeguarding Group will deliver the aims of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

6.2 The progress against the Delivery Plan update and performance report covering the period to the end of quarter 2, is presented at Appendix 2. The plan includes actions to be delivered over two years to continue to strengthen the organisational approach to safeguarding, reflecting current best practice, legislation and learning from the regional and national Safeguarding Boards.

6.3 Notable progress to quarter 2 includes:

- The development of a new two-year Delivery Plan for 2023 – 2025, including actions relevant to operational safeguarding risks across the Council. The group membership has been expanded to include a wider range of functions to manage new general safeguarding risks, for example around digital and Data Security.

- The Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed and revised to reflect current legislation and practice and considering the WG/WLGA best practice guidance. The revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been expanded to include additional areas, including professional practice, Digital & ICT, planning and contextual safeguarding.
  - A new performance management framework is in place, aligned with the Council's wider performance reporting periods. We have included Corporate Safeguarding in the 2023/24 Service Self Evaluation and it is included as a new section in the corporate elements of the Annual Self-Assessment for 2022/23.
  - A Council specific Safeguarding Training Standards document based on the National Training Standards has been completed and was approved at the Corporate Safeguarding Group on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023.
  - Data from schools collected through the "My Concern" safeguarding software system is monitored, and findings reported to the Headteacher safeguarding cluster convenor groups.
  - A thematic review of safeguarding issues arising from internal audit inspection of schools has been included in the annual Internal Audit programme.
  - A guide to '[Tackling Modern Slavery in our Supply Chains](#)' has been prepared and shared with suppliers to raise awareness.
  - Staff mandatory Safeguarding training continues to be rolled out and safe recruitment processes remain in place across the Council.
  - Staff awareness of Corporate Safeguarding requirements has been assessed in the recent staff survey and remains reassuringly high with 96% of respondents aware of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding policy and more importantly, 92% confirming they knew how to report suspected or know abuse/neglect.
- 6.4 The Delivery Plan will be revisited following end of year review and scrutiny to ensure any changes emerging from Corporate Policy revisions and/or Scrutiny feedback is fully reflected.

## **7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This report does not require an equality impact assessment. An equality impact assessment screening exercise has been undertaken for the Corporate Safeguarding policy which indicates that there are no negative impacts upon protected groups. Consequently, there is no need to undertake a full equality impact assessment.

## **8 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are here are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with the recommendations set out in Section 2.

## **9 CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 There are no consultation implications arising with this report. Should the new draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy be approved by members following scrutiny, this will be shared with staff across the organisation, as part of our ongoing communication efforts to raise awareness and understanding of safeguarding responsibilities.

## **10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 11.1 The Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements function within a complex legislative framework, the details of which are covered in the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

## **12 LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 12.1 Safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk is a key priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and 'is everyone's business'. By keeping our residents, both young and old, safe, the Council is contributing to the National Well-being goals, in particular a Healthier Wales, a More Equal Wales and a Wales of more Cohesive Communities in particular.
- 12.2 The Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements support the 'PEOPLE' priority of the Council's current Corporate Plan 2020-24, '[Making a Difference](#)', 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".

## **13 CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 The Council continues to make progress in delivering its Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities. The new Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed against current guidance and revised accordingly. This establishes a framework within which the Council can discharge its safeguarding responsibilities to keep the most vulnerable people in our communities safe.
- 13.2 The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group has developed a new Delivery Plan for 2023-25 to maintain focus on continuous improvement in respect of safeguarding practice, governance, recruitment, workforce, and procurement. Good progress is being made but as always, the Council will continue to actively monitor its performance and compliance through robust governance.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**Background Papers:**

- a) The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements – [Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020](#)
- b) Local Authority Arrangements to Safeguard Children and Adults at Risk – [Cabinet – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021](#)
- c) Local Authority Arrangements to Safeguard Children and Adults at Risk – [Community Services Scrutiny Committee – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022](#)

Officer to contact: Paul Mee