



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – INFORMATION ITEM

SUBJECT: SAFEGUARDING

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding safeguarding developments in 2020/2021.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council and is embodied in the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014.

2.2 The Local Authority (LA) has clear policies and procedures linked to safeguarding children in education services. Safeguarding underpins priorities within the Directorate Plan (2018 – 2023) and all related plans and reflects the introduction of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) within its principles and practices.

2.3 The LA works in partnership with Children's Services, Health, Police, education providers, parents/carers and other partners to ensure that there is a robust approach towards safeguarding arrangements.

2.4 The LA has a pivotal role in safeguarding activities at a national, regional and local level for example the National Safeguarding in Education Group (SEG), and the regional South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) SEG. This ensures that policy and practice are well informed.

2.5 In January 2021, the new multi-agency Safeguarding Hub was introduced to IAA; education is an integral part of this system when safeguarding concerns are received. Schools/education settings are required to take part in strategy discussions to share pertinent information and contribute to the multi-agency safety planning for children who are deemed vulnerable or 'at risk'.

2.6 The LA has a clear system of self-evaluation in relation to safeguarding (linked to ESTYN guidance and broader self-evaluation processes). This informs developments in processes and practice.

- 2.7 The LA Safeguarding Policy for schools/education settings directly reflects the 'Keeping Learners Safe' Circular 270/2021.
- 2.8 Under COVID-19, a number of protocols and procedures have been implemented to adapt to the new way of working, for example updated guidance for schools regarding safeguarding responsibilities during lock down, schools' blended learning policy, live streaming/on-line learning and risk assessments. The LA has adopted the Welsh Government guidance and expectations in relation to supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Hubs were offered to the most vulnerable learners. Regular online surgeries for Head Teachers have been held to explore any COVID 19 pandemic related issues that currently impact education settings.
- 2.9 Allegations against professionals are managed robustly with engagement from education, social services, HR and other relevant professionals.
- 2.10 The LA provides robust training and support to schools/education settings, LEI & Governors. The LA has revised the model of training for schools recognising the need to ensure that there is a sustainable model in place that will enhance the capacity for schools to effectively manage safeguarding issues.
- 2.11 There are robust monitoring arrangements in place with regards to the scrutiny of physical intervention forms. This ensures that the LA exercises its duty of care in relation to pupils and staff members.
- 2.12 Operation Encompass alerts from Police are shared with schools daily in order that the wellbeing of learners is adequately supported in schools following a domestic incident.
- 2.13 There are robust systems in place regarding the recording and monitoring of discriminatory incidents. Guidance is updated to reflect any new categories as they are defined. The LA has been recognised by Stonewall as developing good practice in this area.
- 2.14 The LA has a good system of audit for schools and maintained child care settings to audit their responses to safeguarding responsibilities. Additional checks are built into this process to ensure that the audits themselves are robust, which now align with the 'Keeping Learners Safe' model of audit and scrutiny. Any actions arising from the audits are undertaken and checked by managers.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Safeguarding is a priority and it is important that Members are apprised of relevant work undertaken in this area.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council and is embodied in the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. Processes and

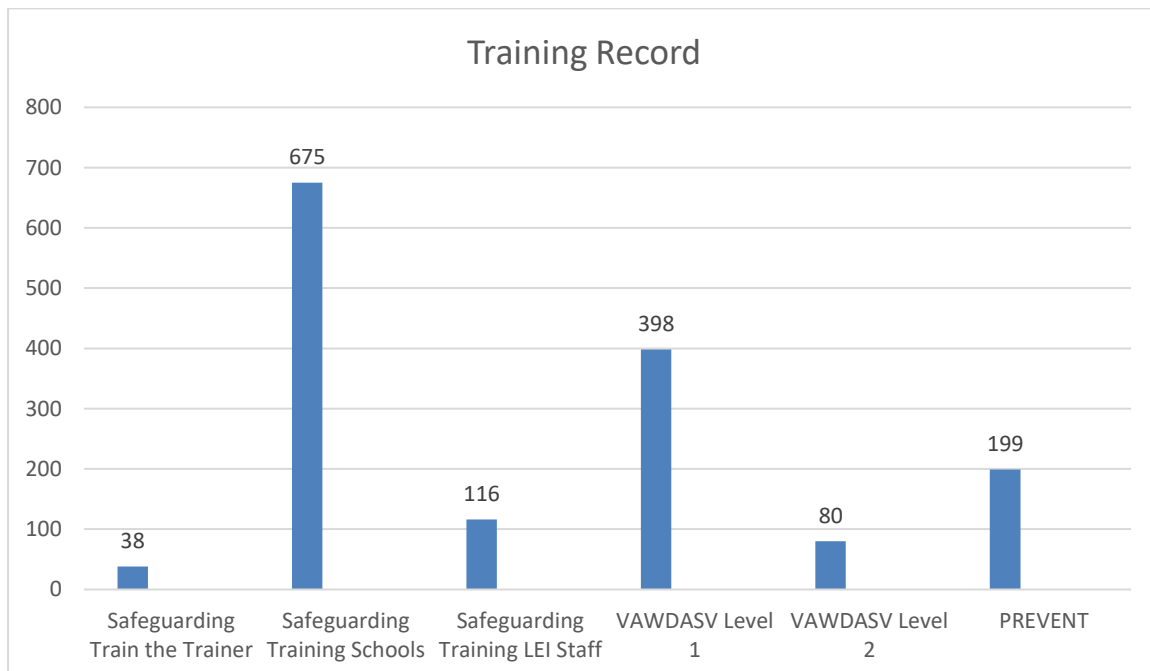
procedures are identified within the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (previously All Wales Child Protection Procedures).

- 5.2 The LA has a clear definition of safeguarding linked to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and clearly defined responsibilities as outlined in the Corporate Policy including areas such as Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDA&SV) and Counter-terrorism and risk of radicalisation (Prevent)
- 5.3 Safeguarding is a priority in the Education and Corporate Services Directorate and is central to priorities in the Education Plan for 2018 – 2023.
- 5.4 Safeguarding runs as a theme through the Education Directorate Service Improvement Plan which is reviewed annually. This includes a review of roles and responsibilities linked to the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act 2018 and the associated changes to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 Part 4.
- 5.5 The LA has a clear Corporate Policy for Safeguarding outlining the intention of the council in relation to safeguarding. As part of the Council's commitment to safeguarding, we work proactively with our partners under the auspices of the Gwent Safeguarding Board to ensure that statutory guidance is followed, awareness and good practice is promoted and the workforce practices safely and effectively.
- 5.6 The LA makes effective contributions to the regional Gwent Safeguarding Board Subgroups, CSA National Action Plan, as well as Corporate Safeguarding Board, Local Safeguarding Network and the Designated Safeguarding Officer practice development group.
- 5.7 The LA have contributed to a number of revised protocols for emerging broader safeguarding issues, such as the Gwent wide Child Exploitation Toolkit (replaces the SERAF scoring), are working closely with Stonewall/Umbrella regarding the policy around LGBTQ and have representation on Child Sexual Abuse National Action Plan Task & Finish Group.
- 5.8 Each of the LAs across South East Wales Consortia (SEWC) is represented at the National Safeguarding Education Group (SEG). Engagement in this group facilitates regional and local developments. The SEWC SEG meets to promote consistency, share good practice and contribute to national consultations.
- 5.9 There is excellent partnership working across Education, Children's Services and other key stakeholders in safeguarding to ensure that there is a robust approach towards safeguarding arrangements. There is on-going representation from education in the broader context, in relation to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee meeting (MARAC), Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meeting (MASE), Case Practice Review's (CPR'), Procedural Response to Unexpected Deaths In Childhood (PRUDIC) and Operation Encompass Task & Finish Group.
- 5.10 Education is an integral part to the new multi-agency Safeguarding Hub, which sits within IAA. Schools/education settings are required to take part in strategy discussions to share pertinent information and contribute to the multi-agency safety planning. Feedback from management within IAA suggests that education representation within this process has been pivotal in this approach.
- 5.11 Designated managers (Lead for Inclusion and ALN and Children's Safeguarding Service Manager) work closely together to ensure that there is consistency across the services in terms of advice, support, training and challenge. The managers also fulfil

an auditing role ensuring an additional layer of evaluation and challenge where necessary, e.g. sampling school audits, monitoring child protection referrals and practitioner concerns.

- 5.12 The LA provides effective advice regarding individual needs via the Information, Assistance and Advice Team (IAA), Child Protection Coordinator, Lead for Safeguarding in Education, Education Safeguarding Coordinator, and HR (where appropriate). The role of the Education Safeguarding Coordinator will continue to ensure there is an appropriate level of ongoing support and guidance to schools, LEI and Youth Services in relation to safeguarding and provide challenge where necessary. The CLA Co-ordinator will ensure there is clear communication with all settings regarding improving outcomes for looked after children.
- 5.13 The LA has a clear Safeguarding Children in Schools/Education Settings Policy, adopted by all schools/settings in the Borough; this is currently under review and will be circulated by the end of April 2021. This directly reflects 'Keeping Learners Safe' Circular 270/2021. Scrutiny of Estyn school inspection reports indicate that there are appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place in schools in Caerphilly.
- 5.14 The local authority manages its responsibilities for safe recruitment through pre-employment checks for local authority staff, and for all school staff (including any directly recruited and paid through the school). The revised Safer Recruitment Policy (agreed January 2021) places greater emphasis on safeguarding responsibilities for recruiting officers.
- 5.15 The LA has a robust process of self-evaluation and specifically follows the Estyn framework for self-evaluation of safeguarding within education. There is also a Corporate safeguarding assessment tool and associated action plan. The LA's contribution to this reflects the areas for development identified within the education self-evaluation. The Corporate safeguarding self- assessment was completed in January 2021.
- 5.16 During the first phase of the pandemic the LA had responsibility, under COVID guidance, for ensuring that arrangements for the learners who were identified as vulnerable, were appropriate and focused on promoting the safety and welfare. In accordance with the principle that children were safer at home unless there was clear information to suggest otherwise, hubs were implemented to support children who were on the child protection register, had care and support plans, mental health needs or Statements of Special Educational Needs.
- 5.17 Allegations against professionals are managed robustly with engagement from Education, Social Services, HR and other relevant professionals. Processes and decision making are reviewed on a half termly basis, which informs the evaluation of thematic trends and learning outcomes. Following allegations schools are supported by the LA to ensure that disciplinary investigations are conducted robustly. Education Safeguarding also support with bespoke training and reflective practice sessions to improve outcomes and learning. Commissioned providers or agencies are also provided with clear guidance regarding the expectation of disciplinary investigations.
- 5.18 Working with partners in Social Services training materials have been revised and a '*train the trainer*' model for schools and education settings have been implemented since January 2020. The LA has recognised the need to review the method of delivery to ensure that there is a sustainable model in place that will enhance the capacity for schools to effectively manage safeguarding issues.

- 5.19 Robust & bespoke Tier 2 equivalent Safeguarding training is delivered to all Learning Education and Inclusions staff, teaching and non-teaching staff, governors and other partners. All schools/settings are up to date with their safeguarding training currently. There is a continued commitment to ensure all schools/education settings/LEI/Youth Services staff are up to date with Corporate/Government recommended/mandatory training.
- 5.20 The Education Safeguarding Coordinator is currently developing specific DSP training, which is aligned with SEG/other Local Authorities, so this can be rolled out in addition to the Level 2 equivalent Safeguarding training. This will be aimed at school's SLT members to enhance their knowledge of local/regional guidance/legislation and wider safeguarding issues.
- 5.21 Within the broad remit of safeguarding there are several key areas of focus such as Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDA&SV) and Counter-terrorism and risk of radicalisation (Prevent). Schools/education setting staff are encouraged to complete the mandatory VAWDASV Level 1 training and front facing staff will complete Level 2 Ask & Act live virtual training sessions. PREVENT online training sessions have also been provided to education staff. Education is represented at strategic groups such as the Whole School Approach to VAWDASV & Operation Encompass Task & Finish Group to ensure that senior managers are well informed of the LA's responsibilities and that information is cascaded to all staff. The safeguarding policy for schools also reflects this key information.
- 5.22 Training data since January 2020



- 5.23 Evaluations are undertaken following each training; evaluation forms are received by Education Safeguarding to record/evaluate the views of those attending. Evaluation forms received indicated that the objectives, usefulness, standard and use of anti-discriminatory practice by the trainer were in the range of 'excellent' or 'completely met'.

- 5.24 Learning Education and Inclusion staff, Head Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) are regularly updated by the Education Safeguarding Coordinator of relevant training resources and available safeguarding courses e.g. Stop it Now, County Lines, Human Trafficking, Safety On-line, Hwb on-line courses and Wales Safeguarding Procedures Champion training. All schools/settings are aware that further information/courses can be accessed via the Gwent Safeguarding Board.
- 5.25 There is a robust system for recording and monitoring physical interventions. The LA has adopted the Team Teach model of de-escalation and restricted physical intervention. There is an effective process for monitoring incidents of physical intervention and restraint in schools/settings. There are clear criteria to trigger follow up visits with schools. Physical interventions are received by Education Safeguarding on the day the intervention takes place; these are subsequently reviewed on a weekly basis by Education Safeguarding Coordinator and Behaviour Support to ensure the correct Team Teach approaches are used and any safeguarding concerns are identified/followed up. Schools are regularly contacted for clarity and offered guidance/advice from a safeguarding or Team Teach perspective.
- 5.26 During 2019 /20 the LA received 226 restrictive physical intervention forms. This is compared to 514 in 2018 /19. In the academic year 2020 / 21 to date (24th March 21), there have been 119 physical intervention forms received.
- Of these performance indicators:
- 27.73% Primary
 - 0.84% Secondary
 - 0% EOTAS
 - 66.39% SRB's
 - 5.04% Special School
- NB. The reduced number of PI's in 2019/20 academic year are largely affected by the onset of COVID-19 in March where schools were closed for a number of months, therefore limited direct contact with children.*
- 5.27 In partnership with Gwent Police, the LA has engaged with Operation Encompass since 2019, regularly attending quarterly Task & Finish Groups. The LA has developed a robust process of ensuring that schools receive daily information regarding incidents of domestic abuse so that they are able to fully support the needs of their learners in a safe environment; feedback continue to indicate that this is welcomed by schools and enables them to identify potentially vulnerable pupils. The LA contributes to the regional group to review current practice and identify areas for future development. The performance data available to the LA will be used to inform local developments.
- 5.28 There is a robust system for recording and monitoring a range of discriminatory incidents requiring schools to submit returns to the LA on a termly basis which are scrutinised by LA officers. This is updated with any additional characteristics linked to discrimination as required. Schools are offered support and guidance as required.
- 5.29 The LA has a good system of audit for schools and maintained child care settings to examine their responses to safeguarding responsibilities. This aligns with the 'Keeping Learners Safe' model of audit. Additional checks are built into this process to ensure that the audits themselves are robust. The LA rates audits using a traffic light system and undertakes follow up actions with schools as required. Any actions arising from the audits are undertaken and checked by managers. All schools are now rated as green.

5.30 **Conclusion**

5.31 Safeguarding underpins all priorities within the LA. The LA contributes to national and regional groups to ensure up to date practice across the Education Directorate and schools. There are several areas of focus for the work of education safeguarding including advice and support, training, audit, and support for professional concerns.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 In considering the recommendations the following assumptions have been made:

- Safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council and as such must be reported to scrutiny to ensure that members are kept informed.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 This report provides information and therefore an integrated impact assessment has not been completed at this time.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no financial implications.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no personnel implications.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees based on consultations undertaken to date.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Social Services and Wellbeing Act
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Education (Wales) Act 2014
Education Act 1996 - Equality Act 2010
Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act (2018)

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Steve Harris, Head of Corporate Finance
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Jane Southcombe, Finance Manager
Paul Warren, Lead for School Improvement
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
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