



## **EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

**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 2021/2022.

### **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 & Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019).

2.2 The Local Authority has a responsibility to promote a culture of safeguarding by ensuring that its range of statutory responsibilities and non-statutory responsibilities are met. The LA works in partnership with Children's services and EAS and can demonstrate that safeguarding is everybody's business through thorough review of safeguarding practice at all levels within the Council.

2.3 The Local Authority (LA) has clear policies and procedures linked to safeguarding children in education services, which are reviewed and updated when required. Safeguarding underpins priorities within the Directorate Plan (2018 – 2023) and in all related plans, is reflected in Cabinet commitments and reflects the introduction of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) within its principles and practices.

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

2.5 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), the regional South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) SEG, in conjunction with Caerphilly Local Safeguarding Network (LSN) and Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) groups. This ensures that policy and practice are well informed.

- 2.6 Education continues to be an integral part of the multi-agency Safeguarding Hub. Schools/education settings continue 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'.
- 2.7 The LA has a clear system of self-evaluation in relation to safeguarding (linked to ESTYN guidance and broader self-evaluation, such as the Corporate and Education Directorate Safeguarding Self Evaluation documents. This informs developments in processes and practice.
- 2.8 The LA Safeguarding Policy for schools/education settings directly reflects the 'Keeping Learners Safe' Circular 270/2021 & Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019).
- 2.9 Post COVID-19, the LA continues to adopt the Welsh Government guidance and expectations in relation to all pupils, specifically supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners in the aftermath of the pandemic. Schools and Education settings are slowly adapting and reverting to normality, implementing risk assessments where necessary and in line with any updated guidance.
- 2.10 Allegations against professionals are managed robustly with engagement from education, social services, HR and other relevant professionals.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 There are robust monitoring arrangements in place with regards to the scrutiny of restricted physical interventions. This ensures that the LA exercises its duty of care in relation to pupils and staff members.
- 2.13 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. Fortnightly updates resulting from Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) meetings are also provided to schools to strengthen this process and assist with risk management and safety planning. This aligns with the VAWDASV National Framework.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 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 'Estyn' 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 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
- 5.3 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 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).
- 5.6 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.
- 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, HR, 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), Child 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 timely multi-agency safety planning. Feedback from management within IAA and school representatives suggests that education participation within this process has been pivotal in this approach when risk assessing and planning a response to school age children when a safeguarding report is made. To ensure a consistent approach between key Gwent partner agencies, representation is made by Education Safeguarding at the bi-monthly West Delivery Group meetings, jointly chaired by Social Services and Gwent Police.
- 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 additional appointment of a new Safeguarding Officer will seek to strengthen existing safeguarding process and assist in the development of new safeguarding initiatives. 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 in readiness for the new academic year in September. This directly reflects 'Keeping Learners Safe' Circular 270/2021.
- 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 Safer Recruitment Policy (agreed October 2020) places greater emphasis on safeguarding responsibilities for recruiting officers. The Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Policy was ratified by Cabinet in October 2020, referencing DBS checks for Governors and volunteers. Education Safeguarding will collaborate with HR colleagues to promote and deliver training to schools, setting and LEI staff around Safer Recruitment so all education staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities. There will also be awareness raising sessions arranged through Procurement around the new safeguarding protocols for contractors/suppliers who may come into contact with children in our learning environments.
- 5.15 The LA has a robust process of self-evaluation and specifically follows the Estyn framework for self-evaluation of safeguarding within education. Schools are required to submit an up to date SER to the LA as part of their routine 3 yearly safeguarding Audit. For those schools/settings who are not due for audit, the LA will request a copy of their SER on an annual dip sample basis. There is also a Corporate Safeguarding assessment tool and associated action plan. The LA's contribution to

this reflects all education service areas development, identified within the Education Directorate self-evaluation. The Corporate safeguarding self- assessment was completed in May 2022.

- 5.16 Post pandemic, all learners continue to be supported by a range of education service areas, with 'wellbeing' remaining a focus.
- 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 appropriate risk management plans are in place and 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 pre-meetings held to establish clear guidance and terms of reference regarding the expectation of employer investigations.
- 5.18 Working with partners in Social Services, training materials have been revised and a '*train the trainer*' model for Heads/DSP's in 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. School/settings are requested to update the LA when whole school training has then been delivered so accurate records can be kept and monitored.
- 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; this is delivered to Heads/DSP's at least 2-3 months in advance of their three-year rolling due date. 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 framework.
- 5.20 The Education Safeguarding Coordinator delivered specific DSP training in July 2021, 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. This will continue to be developed, to include a hybrid model of training modules and workshops in a blended learning approach.
- 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 A system has been developed in collaboration with EAS for delivering safeguarding training to school Governors. Education Safeguarding Coordinator will provide dates

in advance for the Governors annual schedule to deliver safeguarding training to Governing Body 2 x annually via the Governor Network and 3 x annually to Designated Governors.

- 5.23 The National Safeguarding Training Framework is due out in November 2022 and training will be reviewed to ensure it is compliant with the expectations of the framework
- 5.24 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'.
- 5.25 Learning Education and Inclusion staff, Head Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) are regularly updated by the Education Safeguarding Coordinator of relevant documentation, training resources and available safeguarding courses e.g. Stop it Now, County Lines, Human Trafficking, Safety On-line, Hwb on-line courses and any new local/national guidance/legislation. All schools/settings are aware that further information/courses can be accessed via the Gwent Safeguarding Board.
- 5.26 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 within 24 hours of the intervention taking place; these are subsequently reviewed on a weekly basis by Education Safeguarding & CLA Coordinators (both Team Teach trained) 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 or bespoke reflective sessions from a safeguarding or Team Teach perspective. Monthly meetings with the Lead for Inclusion & ALN support the process and provide an oversight of the learning/outcomes of the weekly meetings as an additional layer of scrutiny. The Use of Physical Intervention and Reasonable Force to Restrain Pupils Policy, along with the Time Out Policy are currently being reviewed and will be ready for schools/setting to adopt by the new Autumn term in September 2022. A central database is kept of school/setting staff's Team Teach training dates, with reminders sent when this is due for renewal.
- 5.27 In response to Everyone Invited, it is the LA's expectation that all schools and education settings in Caerphilly should be actively reviewing the culture and processes they have in place to safeguard learners, including fostering a culture where incidents of sexual harassment and abuse are not normalised and learners are encouraged to, and feel confident in, reporting incidents. In relation to specific schools, education safeguarding has been working directly with those schools to undertake an earlier audit, reviewing policies, safeguarding self-evaluation and safeguarding practices more broadly. There is a range of current Guidance and training resources, which has been made available to schools and education settings on issues relating to peer sexual harassment and abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour which are routinely promoted and distributed by education safeguarding; schools are also provided with advice on practical tools to prevent and respond to instances of peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual

behaviour taking place both inside and out of the settings, including on-line and digital abuse.

- 5.28 As a result of Estyn's thematic review Autumn 2021, a number of recommendations were made to consider the prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and how schools' safeguarding culture encourages and empowers pupils to keep safe, stand up to their peers and report all forms of sexual harassment. The LA leads meet on a regular basis to develop a local education action plan in relation to Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment/ Harmful Sexual Behaviours, bringing together support from education safeguarding, healthy schools and the wellbeing team to identify, implement and monitor 'sexually motivated behaviour' as a specific type of behaviour through school bullying / discriminatory recording and reporting procedures.
- 5.29 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. An additional layer of audit will be built into this process so there are 2 x annual check-ins with schools/settings to gather information re: impact and outcomes for pupils subject to an Operation Encompass alert.
- 5.30 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.
- 5.31 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', using the Estyn 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. As an example between 01.04.21 – 31.03.22:
- 45 schools/settings have been audited
  - 43 schools/setting were rated green across all aspects of the audit
  - 1 school/setting had one amber action relating which was rectified immediately
  - 1 school/setting had two individual actions rated red which were addressed and followed up to check the LA were satisfied. This involved:
    - meeting with the Head, lead for safeguarding and safeguarding coordinator following the audit to discuss the concerns/areas for improvement
    - devising an action plan
    - following up actions
    - undertaking a follow-up audit ensuring actions were completed
- 5.32 **Conclusion**  
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 be 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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