



Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children

Caerphilly County Borough Council

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Summary report

Background

1. The safeguarding of children is everyone's responsibility. Local authorities have a statutory duty to have in place safeguarding arrangements which include strategic planning, support and guidance for all providers of relevant services in its area, and the direct provision of some services itself. In particular, local authorities have a duty to work in partnership with others to secure the safeguarding and wellbeing of children in their area, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
2. Employees and volunteers who work with children have specific safeguarding duties and responsibilities. Local authorities and schools must ensure through their Human Resources (HR) and personnel arrangements that adequate checks are in place to ensure that employees and volunteers are of good character and that their working practices are managed and monitored. Local authorities must also ensure that there are processes in place to investigate and record safeguarding allegations made against staff, teachers and support staff, and volunteers.
3. Members, chief executives and senior managers need to ensure that they have proper oversight of the safeguarding arrangements that are in place across the authority. They should actively seek and gain assurance that arrangements are operating effectively, as without this they will be unable to demonstrate that they have discharged their statutory obligation in respect of safeguarding.
4. During the period March to May 2014, the Wales Audit Office completed a review of Caerphilly County Borough Council's (the Council) assurance and accountability arrangements for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are being adhered to. The study examined what the Council itself has done to seek assurance that its arrangements to support safeguarding are effective by reviewing how the Council is discharging its safeguarding responsibilities at all levels: Cabinet, Senior Management Team, Scrutiny and individual officers.
5. The study focused on answering the following: **Does the Council's governance and management arrangements provide assurance that children are safeguarded?**
The main questions that the review sought to answer were:
 - Are there clear governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children?
 - Is the Council monitoring and evaluating appropriate information, which provides assurance that it is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children?
 - Are assurance systems operating effectively?

Review findings and conclusions

6. We examined policies relevant to safeguarding; reports to Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny; and set out below our conclusions based on the extent to which the Council has put in place, and is operating, effective management and assurance processes and controls for safeguarding. As part of this study we made available an online survey for elected members, senior managers, education, schools and leisure staff to test the Council's arrangements for safeguarding. Surveying is valuable because it provides an insight into the Council from the perspective of the people who make decisions and do the work. It also allows us to determine what the relative strengths or weaknesses of local safeguarding arrangements are and identify where councils can make improvements. The detailed survey findings for the Council are set out in [Appendix 1](#), although we include headline conclusions where relevant in each of the following sections.

The governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children have some weaknesses which the Council is addressing

7. The Assistant Director of Children's Services represents the Council on the South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board (SEWSCB) and disseminates key information to senior officers through relevant forums such as team meetings including the Senior Management Team and the Divisional Management Team. The SEWSCB covers the five Gwent councils and was set up in April 2013. The SEWSCB is a multi-agency partnership comprising of representatives from Gwent Police, Social Services and Education Directorates from the five councils, the Voluntary Sector, Youth Offending Services, the All Wales Probation Trust, CAF/CASS Cymru, Housing, Public Health Wales and Aneurin Bevan Health Board. The purpose of SEWSCB is to ensure safeguarding children remains high on the agenda across the region.
8. The SEWSCB is the key body for overseeing safeguarding and child protection policy development. The Council also has its own Learning and Review Group, which is a multi-agency group involving practitioners, police, probation and representatives from head teachers of secondary and primary schools. The Safeguarding Manager in Education also attends the group as a representative of the Directorate of Education and Life Long Learning. The group meets monthly and undertakes themed audits of case files. There is also a Corporate Parenting Board in place which meets quarterly. Membership includes representatives from Social Services, Education, Housing, the Aneurin Bevan Health Board, community safety, foster care, and youth services as well as elected members.

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9. Both Estyn and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) have been positive about the Council's safeguarding arrangements. The CSSIW's annual review and evaluation of performance 2012-13 stated:

'The performance in children's safeguarding remains within the upper quartile of councils in Wales although the percentage of conferences and core group meetings held within timescales has decreased slightly. The council is a member of the regional safeguarding board and reports that early review has secured change/improvement within some of the subgroups supporting this. The impact of shared arrangements is an area which all members will need to monitor locally as part of the overall governance of the regional arrangement.

Close links are maintained between children's services and education including co-location of safeguarding and working with the team around the family. There is corporate commitment for looked after children, which includes additional funding for educational support.'

10. Estyn noted in its inspection in 2012: 'The authority has clear policy and procedures for safeguarding children and young people. There are effective systems to ensure all education staff are CRB checked, and receive appropriate safeguarding training.'
11. However, the Council does not have a corporate safeguarding policy and uses the All Wales Children Protection Procedures. The lack of a specific local policy to underpin local decision making is a weakness. A separate safeguarding policy is in place for the Education and Life Long Learning Directorate which identifies named officers within this Directorate, but also emphasises the importance of liaising with Social Services.
12. Whilst there is a good working relationship between Social Services and Education staff, the Council lacks a corporate safeguarding policy and the Council has not identified appropriate leads in other services for safeguarding. It is assumed that all members of staff are aware of whom they should raise any issues or concerns with; however, there are no corporate documents specifying who this would be. This weakens corporate accountability and assurance arrangements.
13. There is no written accountability framework in place specifically for safeguarding. Safeguarding is viewed as everyone's responsibility and accountability is reinforced through the Council's standard performance management arrangements including departmental management team meetings, scrutiny, one-to-one appraisals and supervisions. Statutory responsibility lies with the Director of Social Services although the Assistant Director of Children's Services is considered to hold the overall responsibility. However, this is not articulated formally within a corporate policy. Our survey found that 72 per cent of respondents stated they know who the Council's Designated Officer for Child Protection is, higher than our survey average of 67 per cent.

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14. Similarly, there is no lead cabinet member with specific responsibility for safeguarding, although the Cabinet Member for Social Services is recognised by many as holding these responsibilities. This is supported by our survey results which found that only 41 per cent of respondents stated they know who is the Council's lead Councillor for Child Protection, below our survey average of 44 per cent. Indeed, we found that safeguarding is not included in member role descriptions even though the Council is clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The role description for the Cabinet Member for Social Services identifies this member as being the Child Poverty champion.
 15. Each Service Improvement Plan includes an Equalities Improvement and Monitoring Form which specifically highlights the requirement to consider the safeguarding of children. The Council has a number of related improvement objectives including: 'Ensure children and young people who are looked after are supported to achieve their full potential.' There is regular monitoring of progress against these improvement objectives and specific action plans for each improvement objective have been developed.
 16. The Council has a Corporate Risk Register but no specific risks relating to safeguarding are identified as the risk level for safeguarding is currently considered to be low. Estyn and CSSIW inspections, and other Council reviews have not identified any inherent risks relating to safeguarding. Mechanisms are in place to escalate risks for inclusion in the Corporate Risk Register when necessary. Risks are identified and documented in the Service Improvement Plans and directorate risk registers are currently being developed. However, the Corporate Governance Inspection found that risk management was not successfully embedded across the organisation. A specific recommendation around strengthening risk management was raised and the Council has been taking steps to address this.
 17. Risks are also identified through the various SEWSCB subgroups, such as the Case Review and Practice Development Group, and the Local Learning and Review Group, and actions are identified and implemented to mitigate these risks.

The Council's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its safeguarding responsibilities to children have some weaknesses which the Council must address

18. A Ffynnon scorecard is produced to report performance against a large number of Children's Services indicators including 10 national and two local safeguarding-related performance indicators. Performance against the key national indicators shows that the Council is performing well.
19. There are no indicators on corporate measures, such as training and recruitment checks. The scorecard is reported to the Directorate Management Team and Senior Management Team on a monthly basis; the Corporate Management Team quarterly; and the Health, Social and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee mid-year and at the year-end.
20. There is a mechanism in place to report to Scrutiny (Health, Social Care and Wellbeing, and Education For Life), Cabinet and Council. There have been no reports presented to these committees specifically on safeguarding, although some other related areas have been subject to scrutiny including Child Neglect (September 2013), Child Sexual Exploitation (June 2013), and Integrated Family Support Services (June 2013). Scrutiny committees also receive updates against relevant improvement objectives every six months. Reporting to committees with regard to safeguarding is therefore limited.
21. Key HR policies have not been updated to reflect key changes in legislation, such as the Disclosure and Barring Services, and there have been no formal reports to members on recent legislative changes which impact on the work of the Council. For example, the Council's recruitment policy is dated 2004. We understand this is now being reviewed. Council HR staff stated that some procedures have been updated such as a safer recruitment policy to schools which was updated in 2012. Systems are in place to ensure checks and balances are undertaken and we were advised that HR does not register new starters on the payroll until all appropriate checks have been undertaken.
22. Our survey found that 98 per cent of respondents in Caerphilly are clear how their job contributes to safeguarding and protecting children and young people, higher than our survey average of 95 per cent. In addition, 86 per cent stated that their responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children and young people were explained to them when they started in their current role in the Council/school, compared with the Welsh survey average of 75 per cent.

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- 23.** In both the Social Services and Education and Life Long Learning Directorates, there is a clear audit trail of all training courses and attendees along with feedback forms to help identify other areas where further training may be required. There is a database which records who attends each training course and when they are required to attend a refresher course. However, mandated training on safeguarding is not provided to other services. Members interviewed felt that they had been made aware of safeguarding but acknowledged that no specific training has been provided. Safeguarding is not part of the member induction. The Council has no assurance that elected members are adequately trained and supported to deliver this important role. The Council is above the survey average for the number of people who have received training on safeguarding in the last six months – 39 per cent compared with 32 per cent – but has fewer people who have never received safeguarding training, one per cent compared with the all-Wales average of 10 per cent.

The Council's approach to identifying and acting on improvements in its safeguarding arrangements has some weaknesses which the Council is addressing

- 24.** Mandatory training on data protection is undertaken by staff annually. In addition, mandatory Protecting Information e-learning was launched last year and PC users will be asked to repeat the training annually. Face-to-face training on data protection has also been delivered to a wide cross-section of staff and the Council's Information Unit has also attended a number of team briefings to raise awareness of data protection.
- 25.** A report on the outcome of the schools' audits has also been presented to Scrutiny. Safeguarding is a key element of the audit. A Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan has been developed and is an integral part of the Council's improving governance programme. Changes are currently being made.
- 26.** There are a number of examples where the Council has improved its arrangements regarding children's safeguarding and mechanisms are in place to keep these arrangements up to date. Lessons are learned from a variety of forums including the SEWSCB Case Review and Practice Development Group, as well as the Caerphilly Learning and Reviewing Group. Areas where policies and processes have been improved include the use of social media and transferring records. The Gwent Children Missing Project has also identified good practice within education in the Council and is in the process of replicating this across the South East Wales region.
- 27.** The Education and Life Long Learning and Social Services Directorates have also completed separate Section 28 Children's Act Safeguarding audits and submitted these to the SEWSCB Business Manager for review and quality assurance. However, no assessment of corporate arrangements has been completed.

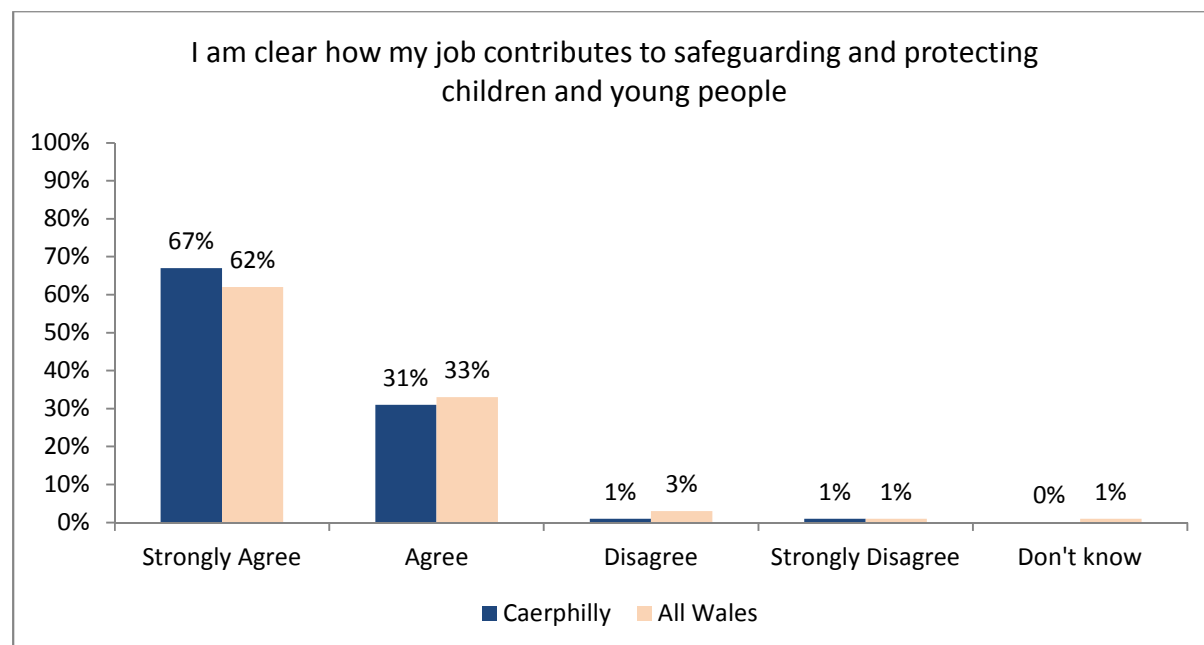
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- 28.** The Information Risk Management Policy has led to the development of Information Risk Registers by all service areas which focus heavily on data protection. The Council has also undertaken a data-mapping exercise to ensure that there are effective controls in place to protect sensitive and confidential information. This is reported to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- 29.** No internal audit or scrutiny reviews on safeguarding have been undertaken in the last five years.

Proposals for improvement

P1	Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.
P2	The Council should clarify who designated officers with responsibility for safeguarding are.
P3	Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to members to provide adequate assurance that corporate arrangements are working effectively.
P4	Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding. This should also include volunteers.
P5	Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding.

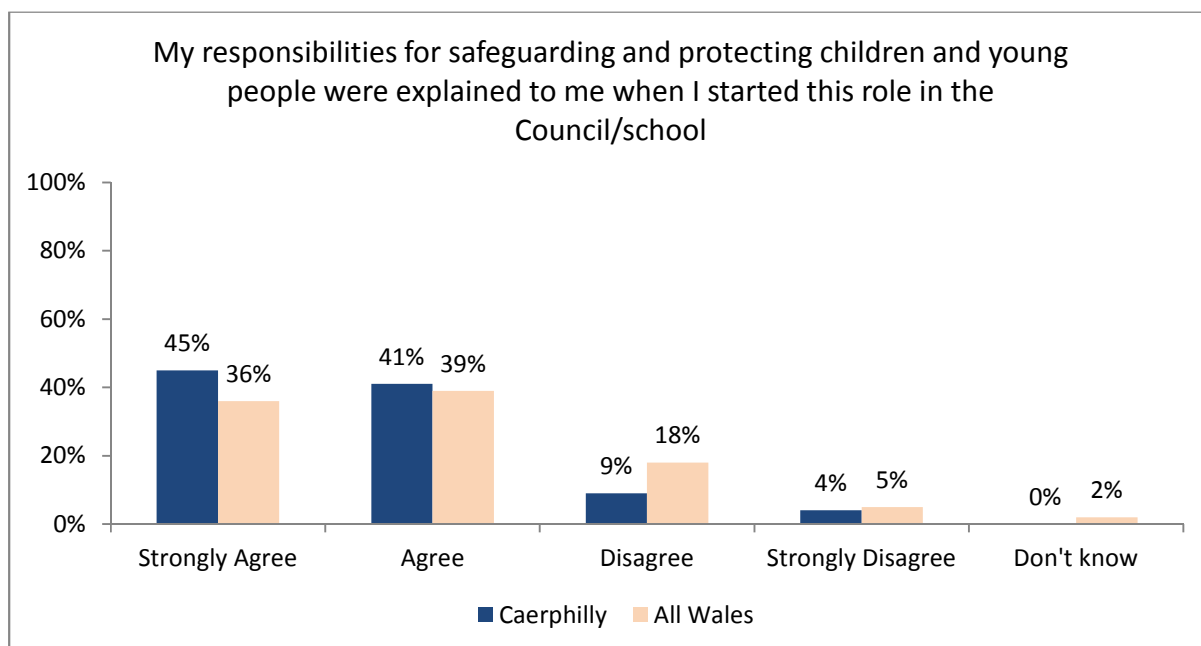
Appendix 1

Summary of survey findings



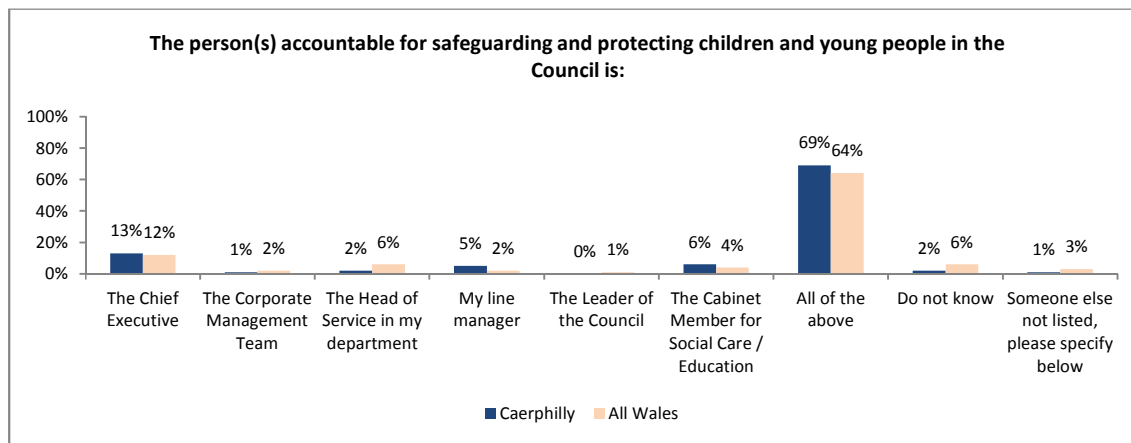
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Caerphilly	98	-	-	66	30	1	1	-
Expressed opinion*				67%	31%	1%	1%	
All Wales	1,996	-	6	1,235	664	53	12	26
Expressed opinion*				62%	33%	3%	1%	1%

* To make the report easier to read, percentages are shown to nearest whole percentage point. It is therefore possible for the individual figures not to total exactly to 100 per cent.



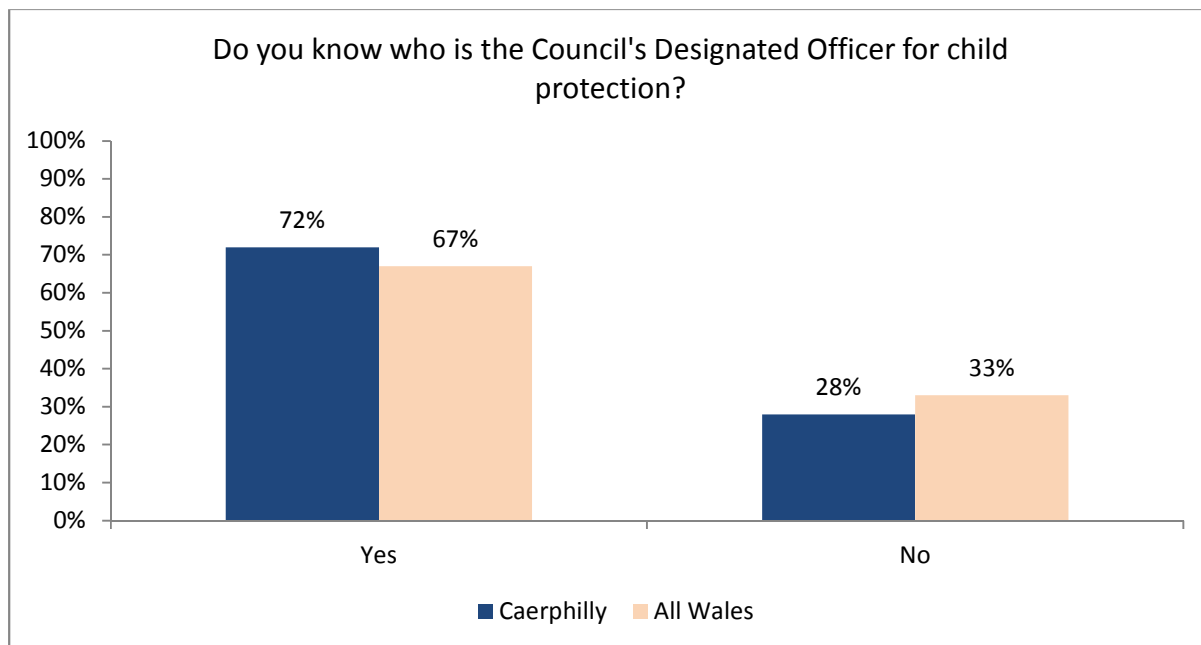
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Caerphilly	98	-	1	44	40	9	4	-
Expressed opinion*				45%	41%	9%	4%	
All Wales	1,996	-	10	716	773	358	104	35
Expressed opinion*				36%	39%	18%	5%	2%

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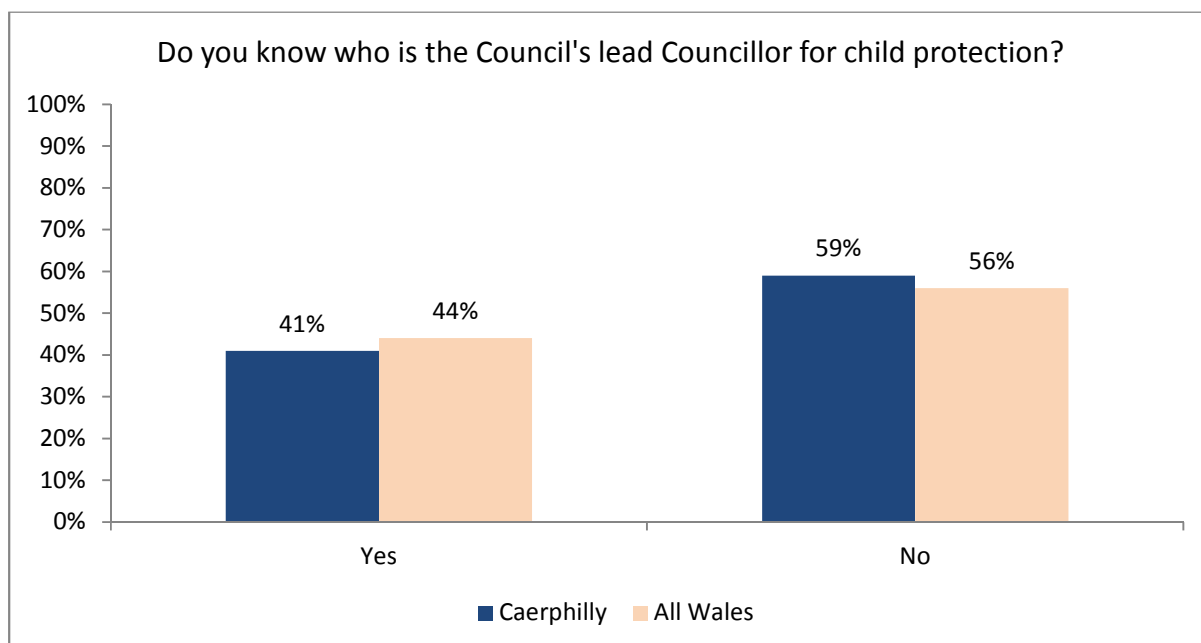
	Total	Not asked	No reply	The Chief Executive	The Corporate Management Team	The head of service in my department	My line manager	The leader of the Council	The Cabinet Member for Social Care/ Education	All of the above	Do not know	Someone else not listed, please specify below
Caerphilly	98	-	4	12	1	2	5	-	6	65	2	1
Expressed opinion*				13%	1%	2%	5%		6%	69%	2%	1%
All Wales	1,996	-	68	223	34	124	47	19	69	1,231	115	66
Expressed opinion*				12%	2%	6%	2%	1%	4%	64%	6%	3%

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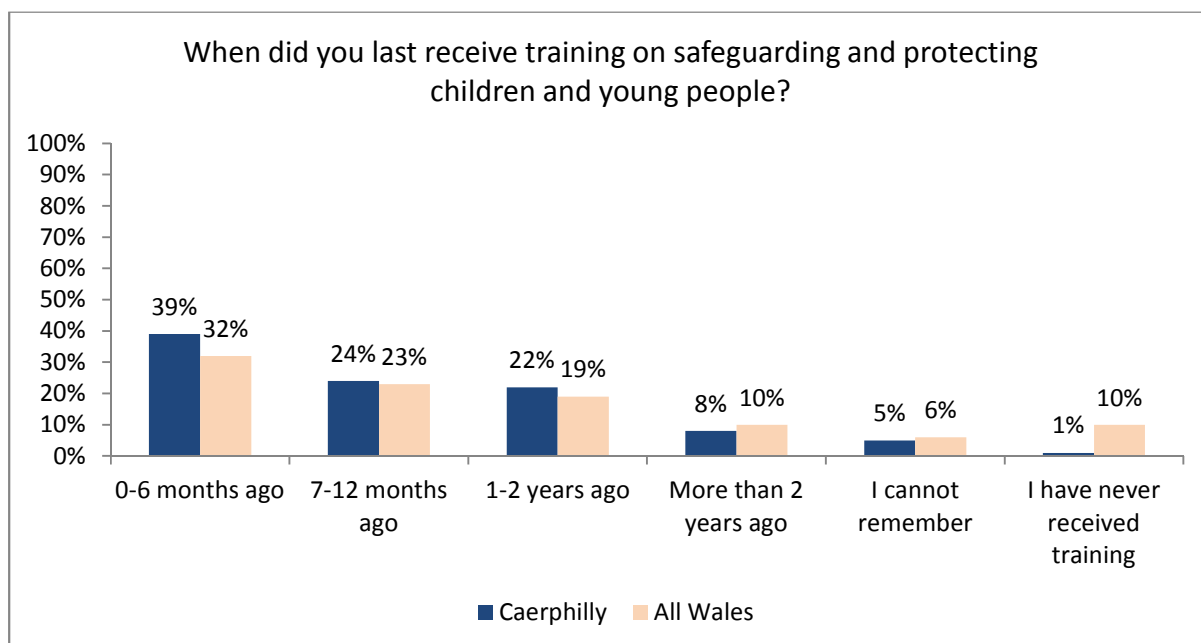
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Caerphilly	98	-	1	70	27
Expressed opinion*				72%	28%
All Wales	1,996	-	13	1,337	646
Expressed opinion*				67%	33%

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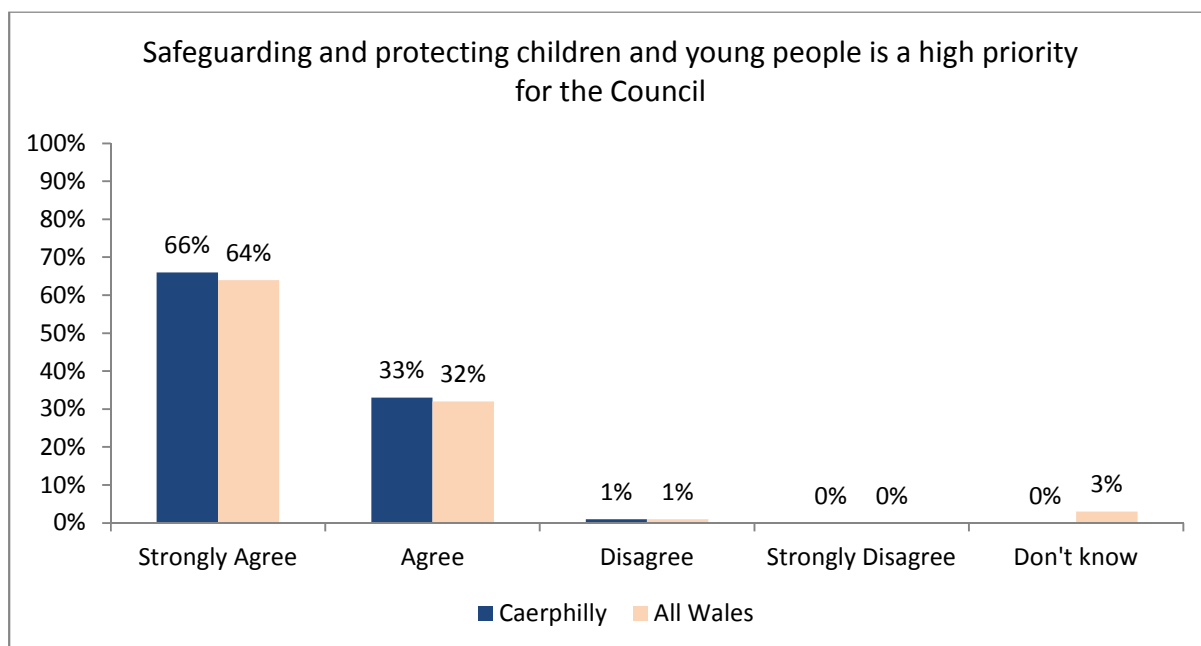
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Caerphilly	98	-	-	40	58
Expressed opinion*				41%	59%
All Wales	1,996	-	13	881	1,102
Expressed opinion*				44%	56%

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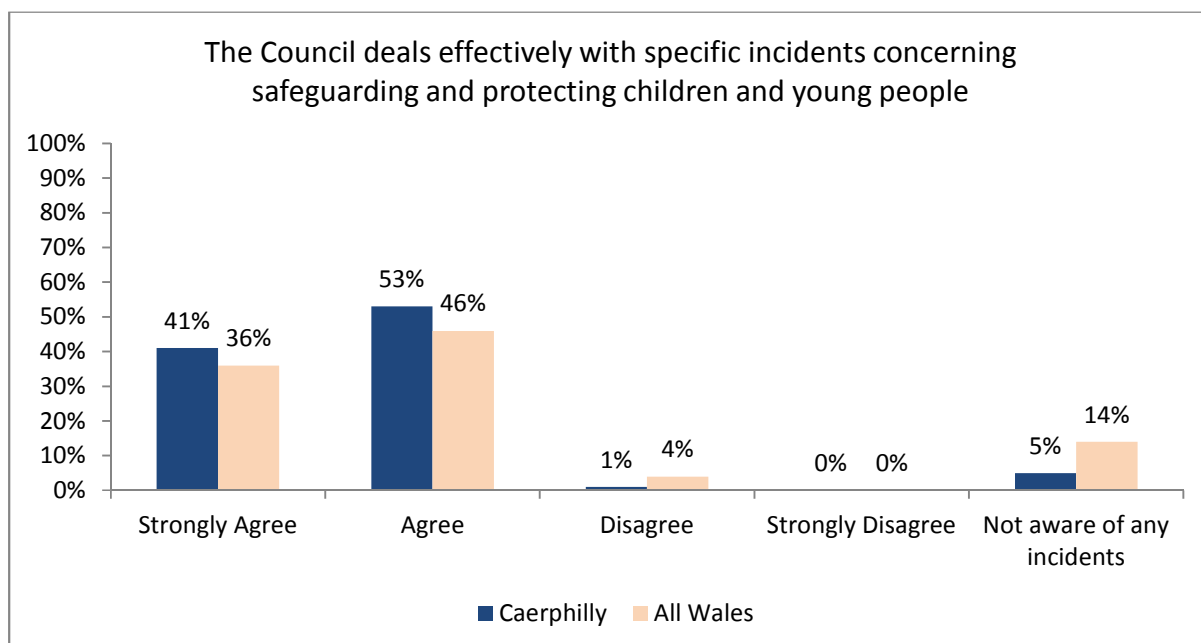
	Total	Not asked	No reply	0-6 months ago	7-12 months ago	1-2 years ago	More than 2 years ago	I cannot remember	I have never received training
Caerphilly	98	-	-	38	24	22	8	5	1
Expressed opinion*				39%	24%	22%	8%	5%	1%
All Wales	1,996	-	4	644	462	374	199	121	192
Expressed opinion*				32%	23%	19%	10%	6%	10%

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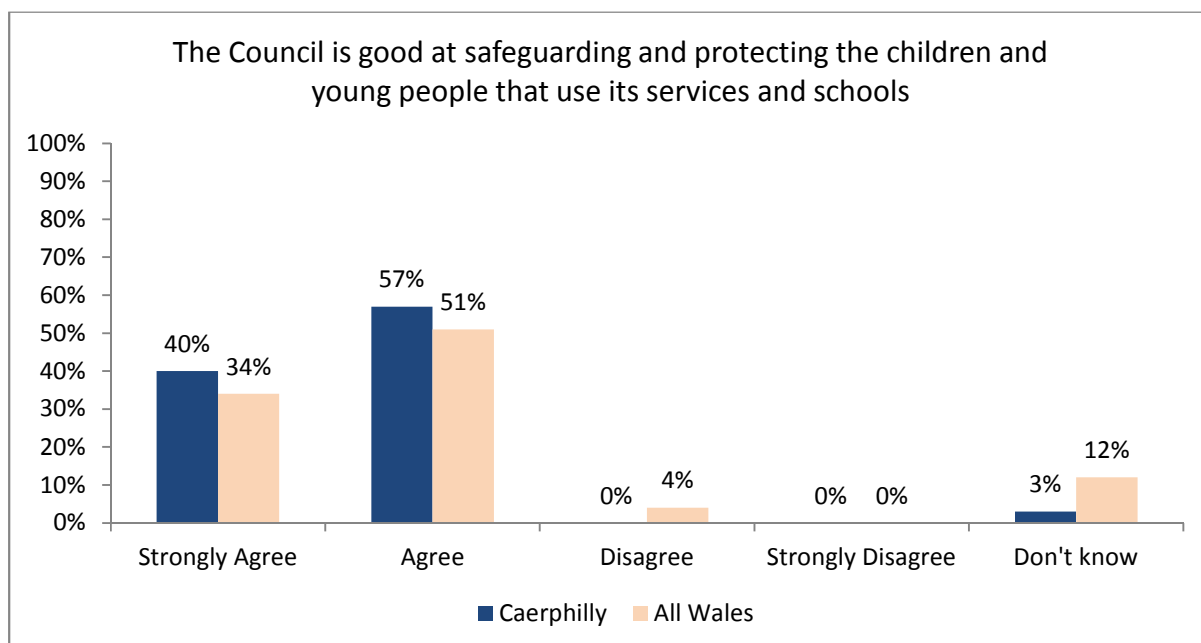
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Caerphilly	98	-	-	65	32	1	-	-
Expressed opinion*				66%	33%	1%		
All Wales	1,996	-	10	1,266	628	27	4	61
Expressed opinion*				64%	32%	1%	0%	3%

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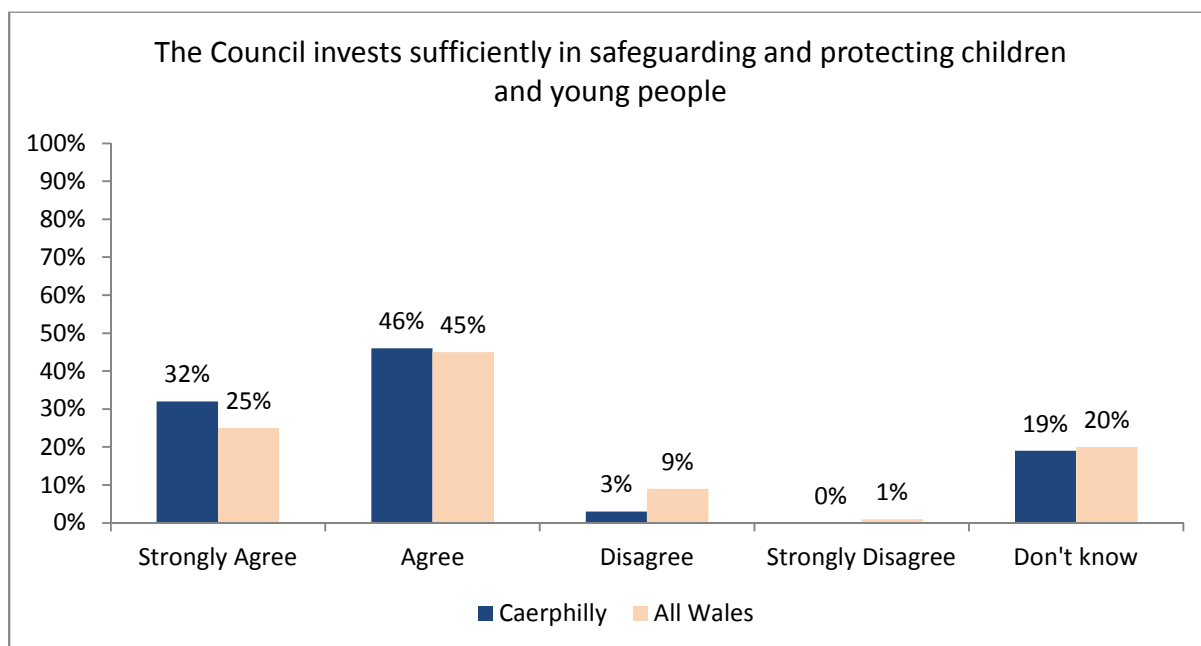
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not aware of any incidents
Caerphilly	98	-	-	40	52	1	-	5
Expressed opinion*				41%	53%	1%		5%
All Wales	1,996	-	11	722	911	76	5	271
Expressed opinion*				36%	46%	4%	0%	14%

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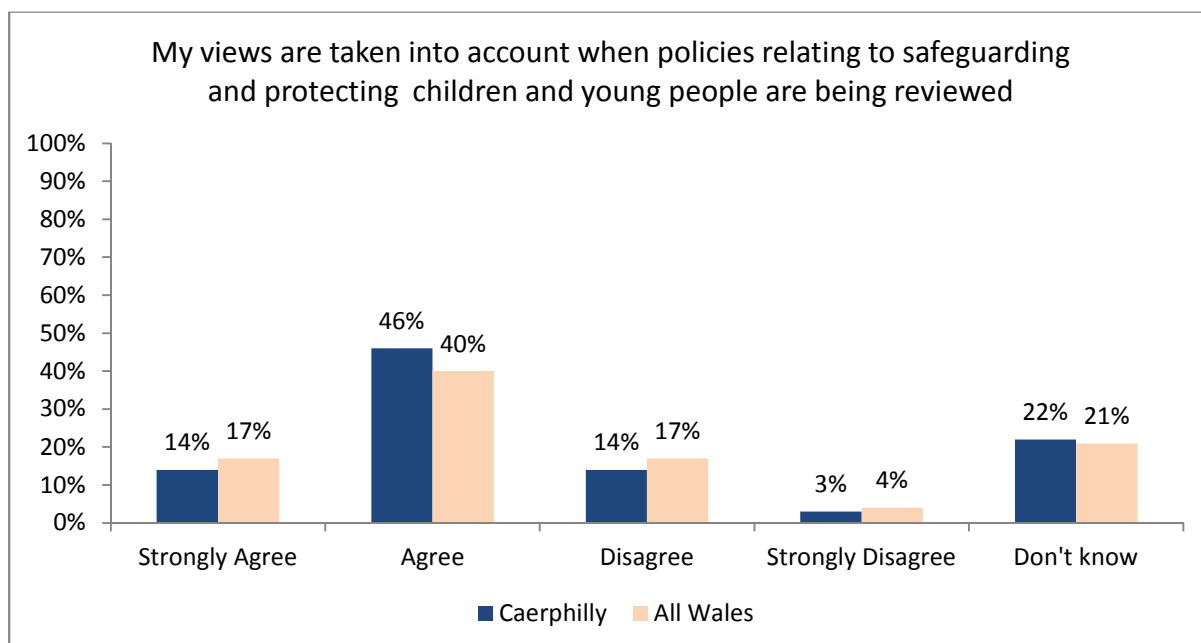
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Caerphilly	98	-	2	38	55	-	-	3
Expressed opinion*				40%	57%			3%
All Wales	1,996	-	20	665	1,000	74	3	234
Expressed opinion*				34%	51%	4%	0%	12%

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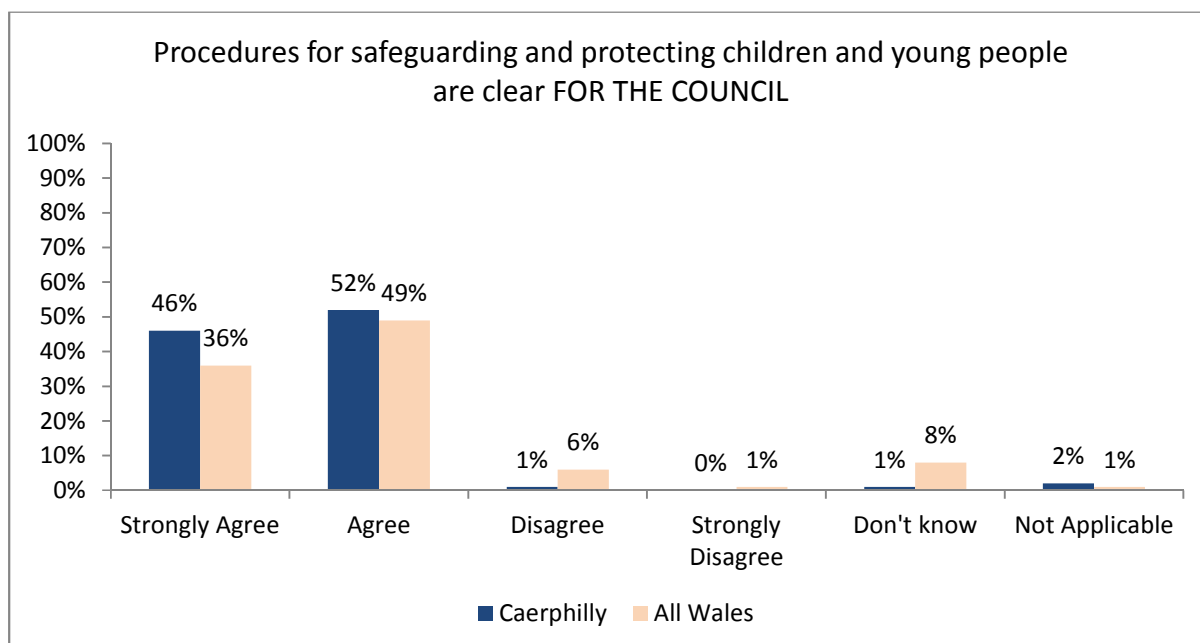
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Caerphilly	98	-	1	31	45	3	-	18
Expressed opinion*				32%	46%	3%		19%
All Wales	1,996	-	17	491	895	182	19	392
Expressed opinion*				25%	45%	9%	1%	20%

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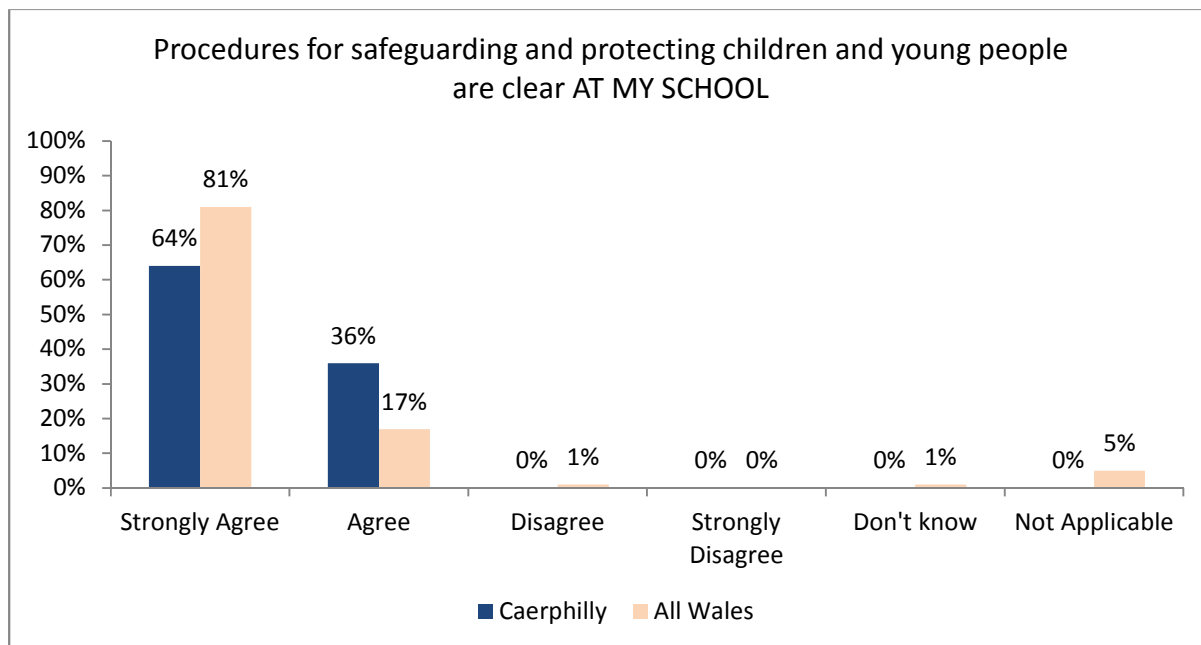
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Caerphilly	98	-	-	14	45	14	3	22
Expressed opinion*				14%	46%	14%	3%	22%
All Wales	1,996	-	20	344	794	339	79	420
Expressed opinion*				17%	40%	17%	4%	21%

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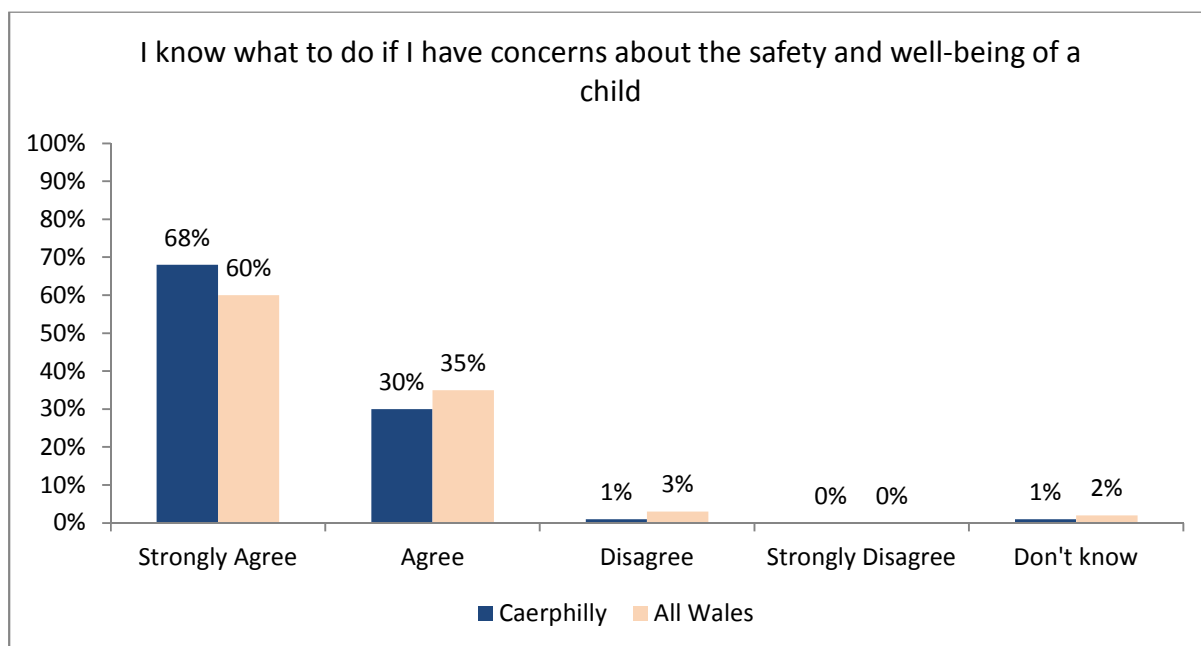
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Not applicable
Caerphilly	98	-	1	44	49	1	-	1	2
Expressed opinion*				46%	52%	1%		1%	2%
All Wales	1,996	-	39	701	942	114	14	160	26
Expressed opinion*				36%	49%	6%	1%	8%	1%

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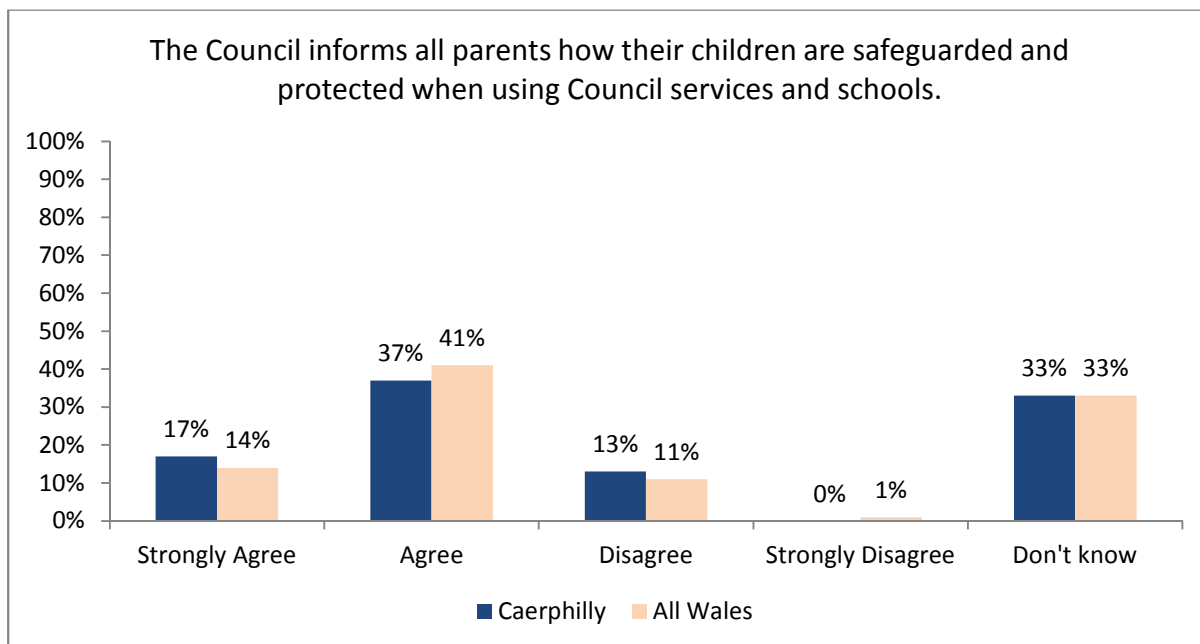
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Not applicable
Caerphilly	98	76	-	14	8	-	-	-	-
Expressed opinion *				64%	36%				
All Wales	1,996	1,399	34	435	92	3	-	5	28
Expressed opinion *				81%	17%	1%		1%	5%

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	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Caerphilly	98	-	1	66	29	1	-	1
Expressed opinion*				68%	30%	1%		1%
All Wales	1,996	-	29	1,174	683	64	8	38
Expressed opinion*				60%	35%	3%	0%	2%

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	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Caerphilly	98	-	4	16	35	12	-	31
Expressed opinion*				17%	37%	13%		33%
All Wales	1,996	-	27	269	816	213	29	642
Expressed opinion*				14%	41%	11%	1%	33%

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