



HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 10TH FEBRUARY 2015

**SUBJECT: WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF LOCAL AUTHORITY
ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny Committee Members of the findings of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Review into the local authority arrangements to support the safeguarding of children and the actions being undertaken within the Council as a result.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In the period March to May 2014 the WAO 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.
- 2.2 The findings of the Review were published in October 2014. The Review was reported to Cabinet on 10th December 2014 where it was agreed that a cross Directorate group of key Officers would be established to implement the recommendations made by WAO. This report summarises the conclusions and recommendations of the Review (which is attached at Appendix 1) and serves to update Members on the proposals to implement the required actions on behalf of the Council.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The WAO Review focused on: 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?

4.2 The report concluded that:

- 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.
- The Council's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its safeguarding responsibilities to children have some weaknesses which the Council must address.
- The Council's approach to identifying and acting on improvements in its safeguarding arrangements has some weaknesses which the Council is addressing.

4.3 It is important for Members to note that the Review does not identify any weaknesses in the operational, day to day safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Caerphilly. The recommendations relate to the corporate governance of those arrangements.

4.4 Following on from the conclusions referred to in paragraph 4.2 above, the Review makes five proposals for improvement. These are:

- Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.
- The Council should clarify who designated officers with responsibility for safeguarding are.
- Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to Members to provide adequate assurance that corporate arrangements are working effectively.
- 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.
- Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding.

4.5 Through discussion at Corporate Management Team and agreement by Cabinet it was proposed that the Assistant Director for Children's Services should lead on the establishment of a cross Directorate Corporate Safeguarding Group to develop and implement an action plan to address the recommendations of the Review.

4.6 Membership of the Corporate Safeguarding Group includes the following Service areas that either have a key strategic contribution to make to the agenda or provide direct services to residents of Caerphilly:

- Education and Life Long Learning
- Regeneration
- Public Protection
- Community and Leisure Services
- Youth Service
- Housing Services
- Customer Services
- Human Resources
- Legal and Democratic Services
- Corporate Performance
- Workforce Development
- Internal Audit and
- Social Services including the
- Youth Offending Service

4.7 The first meeting of the Group took place on 2nd February 2015 and monthly meetings are scheduled until the Corporate Policy is drafted for ratification. Thereafter it is likely that the Group will continue to meet twice yearly to monitor compliance with the Policy.

4.8 Key issues to be considered when responding to the five recommendations are captured in Appendix 2 and include:

- Development and ratification of a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly defines roles and responsibilities of Elected Members, all Officers and volunteers
- The Policy will identify Designated Safeguarding Leads for each Service area who will offer advice and consultation to staff. The Policy will form part of the Induction programme for all new staff.
- The Policy will require each Service area to evidence the arrangements they have in place for safeguarding children and young people, for safe recruitment and for training and development of staff and volunteers.
- The Policy will identify the governance arrangements to confirm compliance with the policy and procedures.

4.9 Progress against the Action Plan will be reported through Audit Committee.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report requires no specific equalities impact assessment.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no known financial implications associated with this report though it is likely that staff groups will be identified who require training and awareness raising. This will be addressed as the work progresses.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct personnel implications associated with this report however, a review of HR policies to ensure they address safeguarding issues will form a fundamental part of the development of the Corporate Policy.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The views of those consulted have been included in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Scrutiny Committee note the conclusions and recommendations contained in the WAO Review.

9.2 That Scrutiny Committee endorse the establishment of the Corporate Safeguarding Group to develop the Action Plan required to address the recommendations.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Compliance with the recommendations from the Wales Audit Office Review will further strengthen the authority's arrangements for the safeguarding of children.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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Consultees: Social Services Senior Management Team
Cabinet Member for Social Services
Corporate Management Team
Corporate Safeguarding Group (2nd February 2015)

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Wales Audit Office: Local Authority arrangements to support the safeguarding of children.

Appendix 2: Action Plan – Issues for Consideration