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Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Democratic Services



THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

13th January, 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

JOINT EDUCATION AND LEARNING & SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING)

A meeting of the Joint Education and Learning & Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) will be held virtually via MS Teams - if you would like to attend please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Friday, 21st January, 2022 at 10.00 am.

Please note that a pre and post meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start and following the conclusion of the meeting for members of the committee.

Yours faithfully



Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

2. **APOLOGIES**

To receive.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

To consider any declarations of interests and dispensations made.

4. **JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING) MINUTES** 5 - 16

To receive the Minutes of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) held on 14th July, 2021.

(Please note the Minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only)

5. **ACTION SHEET - 14TH JULY 2021** 17 - 22

To receive the Action Sheet.

6. **CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING** 23 - 28

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

7. **SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021** 29 - 90

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education and the Corporate Director Social Services.

8. **ADULT SAFEGUARDING REPORT 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021** 91 - 98

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

9. SAFEGUARDING - VULNERABLE LEARNERS

99 - 106

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education.

To: Councillor S. Thomas (Chair)
Councillor H. Trollope
Councillor D. Bevan
Councillor G. Collier
Councillor M. Cook
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor G. L. Davies
Councillor M. Day
Councillor P. Edwards
Councillor L. Elias
Councillor K. Hayden
Councillor S. Healy
Councillor J. Hill
Councillor W. Hodgins
Councillor J. Holt
Councillor C. Meredith
Councillor M. Moore
Councillor J. C. Morgan
Councillor J. P. Morgan
Councillor G. Paulsen
Councillor K. Rowson
Councillor T. Sharrem
Councillor T. Smith
Councillor B. Summers
Councillor D. Wilkshire
T. Baxter
T. Pritchard

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE JOINT
EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(SAFEGUARDING)**

**SUBJECT: JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(SAFEGUARDING) – 14TH JULY, 2021**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT
OFFICER**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: S. Thomas
D. Bevan
M. Cook
G.A. Davies
M. Day
P. Edwards
L. Elias
K. Hayden
S. Healy
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Summers

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Education
Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
Safeguarding in Education Manager
Safeguarding Team Manager, Children's Services
Communications & Policy Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Paulsen, T. Sharrem and D. Wilkshire.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> T. Baxter</p> <p>Head of Children’s Services Strategic Education Improvement Manager Service Manager, Children’s Services (Safeguarding) Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change.</p> <p>It was reported that Alan Williams, Co-opted Member, had resigned due to ill health, the Chair and Members expressed their appreciation for his contribution to the Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee and the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee and requested that a letter of appreciation be forwarded to him.</p> <p>This course of action was AGREED.</p> <p>In relation to the Co-opted Member vacancy, the Corporate Director of Education would liaise with the diocese and other colleagues on a suitable appointment as soon as possible.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	

<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING)</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) Meeting held on 26th April, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
	<p>A Member raised concerns on the late receipt of an updated agenda item and requested that in future an explanation be provided with the updated item when circulated at short notice for Members to be aware of the amendments. The Director of Education explained that the narrative in the report remained the same but the Appendix had been amended to include the Education updates in relation to graphs.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 26TH APRIL, 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) held on 26th April, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – 1ST APRIL TO 31ST MARCH 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager, Children’s Services and the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which was presented to provide Scrutiny Members with safeguarding performance information and analysis from Children’s Social Services and Education from 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2021.</p> <p><u>Social Services information</u></p> <p>The Safeguarding Team Manager, Children’s Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

A Member commented on police being the highest referrer and referred to para 6.3.2 of the report regarding processes developed between Education and the Youth Offending Service to tackle anti-social behaviour in schools and felt this could be extended further between schools, police and the community. He also referred to para 6.3.4 the number of bullying incidents identified by children and young people as an issue that required close monitoring and felt this could potentially be spilling out into the community causing further police referrals.

Another Member commented that the figures for referrals had increased throughout the year, which could be due to the pandemic, but referrals from the Youth Services were decreasing considerably.

The Safeguarding Team Manager responded that she would raise the points above with the appropriate colleagues.

The Corporate Director of Education said there had been a slight decrease of overall referrals from the Youth Services and felt this was due to less face to face contact with children and young people.

A Member referred to page 19 - Figure 2.8: relates to review conferences and the percentage held within timescale shows 100% for Q1 and Q4, 84.4% for Q2 and 96.2% for Q3. The data provided does not give rise to concern. The Member requested that the last sentence "the data provided does not give rise to concern" be reworded. The Safeguarding Team Manager agreed to amend the wording in this sentence.

In relation to the high number of police referrals, a Member felt that not all of the referrals needed to be referred to Social Services. The Safeguarding Team Manager said that it depended on the nature of the referral.

Another Member raised concerns regarding police referrals and enquired if there was a follow up process with the Community Safety Team and Social Services Directorate as he felt that some anti-social behaviour was caused by repeat offenders. The Safeguarding Team Manager confirmed that police did visit anti-social behaviour repeat

offenders to try to reassure communities. The Community Safety Team were proactive in trying to work with communities and other professionals to reduce anti-social behaviours. If a Social Worker was made aware of a particular behaviour of a child via a police referral, then support would be put in place to reduce that behaviour. The Member felt there should be more co-operation between agencies as there were more and more families needing support.

The Director of Social Services explained that if there were vulnerable adults involved then Children's Services would link in with Adult Services and Adult Services would then visit the vulnerable individual.

The Director referred to the previous point regarding the sentence "the data provided does not give rise to concern" and advised Members of the rationale for that statement, he said there had been a dip in quarter 2 performance during the summer months due to the pandemic. In relation to Children's Services and anti-social behaviour the focus was on the child and the family rather than the wider community. They worked closely with the Community Safety Team to determine if a pattern of anti-social behaviour was developing. With regard to referrals, the Director advised Members that a police officer was now part of the Information, Advice and Assistance Service (IAA) and they reported back to police when referrals to Social Services were not appropriate and this helped to filter out unnecessary referrals.

A Member referred to para 7.4 Preventative focus - the work undertaken by the Social Services Directorate looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having a proactive rather than reactive approach to service planning can also help with planning resources. He enquired what successful approaches were being used to reduce numbers as he felt that the figures were not coming down. The Director of Social Services explained that in relation to safeguarding they were slowly moving in a different direction more towards contextual safeguarding. At present safeguarding concentrated on the individual and the family but there were other areas where children became vulnerable outside of the home environment and contextual safeguarding looked

at other areas such as school, peer groups and the neighbourhood where the individual lived. He advised that a lot of work was being undertaken across Gwent around contextual safeguarding and they were trying to introduce this across the Gwent region to start to look at other areas of communities where potentially children could become vulnerable such as a Park, and may need to start to tackle that environment to make it safer for that child rather than tackle the child and the family themselves. This was some of the work being progressed over the next year and would be a change in culture for practitioners to consider other environments that a child may be in, which could potentially make them vulnerable.

The Member enquired if there was sufficient capacity and resources available for the move to contextual safeguarding. The Director responded that with regard to resources it would be the case of working closely with other Directorates such as the Community Services and Regeneration Directorate in relation to parks etc. to ensure that they consider how to make parks safer for vulnerable children. Working closely with different Directorates would ensure that safeguarding, and particularly the contextual safeguarding element, was seen as important to the whole Authority. From a Social Services perspective, the Director felt that sufficient resource was available but it was important to ensure that Directorates work closely together to try and tackle problems in unsafe environments within the communities.

The Chair suggested that a Members Briefing session be arranged in relation to the new way forward, however, a Member felt it would be more appropriate for a report to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in the first instance and proposed that a report in relation to contextual safeguarding be presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

This course of action was AGREED.

A Member reminded Members of the services of Connect Gwent who were a free and confidential service to help and support victims of crime and anti-social behaviour and would post the telephone number on the chat for Members information.

Education information

A Member enquired what was the extent of cyber bullying experienced in schools. The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion said that nearly all schools were using the “My Concern” system and the Local Authority had access to a dashboard to look at the whole school estate and identify the reasons for incidents such as cyber bullying and racial bullying etc. and could identify any difficulties in particular areas or schools and provide the relevant training and support to those schools who needed it.

With regard to paragraph 6.3.7 Operation Encompass - Figure: 4.5 Domestic Abuse incidents, a Member referred to the numbers quoted and pointed out that the number of high, medium and low risk children did not add up to the total of 185 children. The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion said she would check these numbers with the Strategic Education Improvement Manager and report back to the Member.

Another Member referred paragraph 6.3.4 bullying incidents and enquired what form of strategy had been put in place to address the issue. The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion said schools had very stringent measures in place and the MyConcerns system supported schools as bullying incidents could be recorded on that system to help schools track and identify a pattern of repeated behaviour. She advised that schools were using a restorative justice approach, working with the young person who may be exhibiting bullying behaviours and also working with any victims to try to restore those relationships, and using preventative measures to ensure that those behaviours change and that families were also involved.

The Director of Education advised Members that the anti-bullying policy was in place and schools had responded well. With regard to the Education data he pointed out that the period between January and April was a disruptive period for Education and reassured Members that the full data set for Education from the 1st April onwards would be presented to Members at the Joint Scrutiny Committee in the autumn term to provide Members with the full range of data and information for scrutiny purposes.

Head of School Improvement & Inclusion

	<p>With regard to the Anti-bullying Strategy a Member enquired if all Blaenau Gwent schools were going through the process to attain the anti-bullying quality mark and how many schools already had the quality mark at the moment. The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion said that not all the schools were going for this specific quality mark, several schools were going for the Rights Respecting quality mark, which encompassed anti-bullying strategies and had the ethos of valuing and respecting everyone in the school. She advised there were lots of different schemes and systems and she would gather the relevant data to find out exactly what quality mark each school was pursuing. The Member felt this would provide evidence to parents and pupils to have confidence that staff were fully trained and aware of bullying issues.</p> <p>The Director of Education felt this would provide a picture of those schools that were looking for accreditation against those initiatives and could also be fed back to the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>With regard to Operation Encompass, the Chair requested information on what type of referrals were being made, the Head of School Improvement & Inclusion would gather this information for Members.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the approach and information detailed in the report be accepted; and</p> <p>FURTHER AGREED that a report in relation to contextual safeguarding be presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>Head of School Improvement & Inclusion</p> <p>Head of School Improvement & Inclusion</p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES SAFEGUARDING POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Safeguarding in Education Manager which was presented to provide Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the Local Government Education Services Safeguarding Policy following its annual review.</p>	

The Safeguarding in Education Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member referred to paragraph 6.1 of the report and commented on bullet point 5 - Basic training requirements for all staff and volunteers - and felt this should be enhanced training and not basic. The Safeguarding in Education Manager agreed that the word basic did not capture the level of training involved and clarified that it was an agreed level of training that all members of education settings should have, it was a comprehensive level and that all practitioners were fully aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and what they needed to do if there was a concern and how to report that concern.

Another Member supported the view that the word 'basic' in relation to training requirements should be amended.

This course of action was AGREED.

The Corporate Director of Social Services advised Members that they were looking at corporate training i.e. three tier training, there would be a basic level, a medium level and an enhanced level of training. They were currently assessing the level of staff and Member involvement and what level of training would be required and were hoping to bring forward a training programme shortly.

In response to a Member's question regarding the timing of the removal of the annex for responding to Covid from this year's policy. The Safeguarding in Education Manager explained that last year an annex was attached to outline how safeguarding would operate during the early stages of the Covid pandemic. It was a supplementary annex to the policy to guide schools on what they needed to do to maintain contact with vulnerable learners as schools were in a new situation in relation to school closures. As those procedures mirror the content of the safeguarding policy it was felt that the annex could now be removed, but should future situations arise in relation to Covid the Safeguarding in Education Manager would issue timely advice for safeguarding arrangements.

A Member enquired if it was appropriate for Headteachers to also be the Designated Senior Person (DSP) with

responsibility for safeguarding. The Safeguarding in Education Manager said that Headteachers were often a DSP and were supported by a deputy and felt they were well placed to coordinate the safeguarding arrangements in their schools. She continued that Headteachers in Blaenau Gwent schools had good relationships with their staff and had created a culture of openness amongst their staffing group and felt there was no barrier to feeling comfortable speaking with Headteachers. Anyone raising a concern could feel assured by talking to someone with a good level of safeguarding experience. The message, reiterated through training was always to report concerns to the DSP.

A Member stated that from a previous meeting with Estyn when the DSP was the Headteacher and the second DSP was the Deputy Headteacher, it was suggested that it may be appropriate to designate a third person, in case the Head and Deputy were both unavailable.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the draft policy be amended and reference to the word 'basic' in relation to safeguarding training be amended.

No. 9

SAFEGUARDING SELF-EVALUATION OUTCOMES

Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which was presented to provide Members of the Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise the findings of ongoing self-evaluation and business planning processes undertaken within the Education Directorate, across the Council and with key partners.

The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Chair felt that the policy should put emphasis on pupil's voice as pupils raise safeguarding concerns to teachers through this system.

A Member referred to paragraph 6.1.1. bullet point 3 - Recent work to respond to community safety issues, counter potential terrorism and extremist behaviours has progressed well, for example, the Safer School Partnership,

and the Respect and Resilience Action Plan, and felt that extremist behaviours were being witnessed in communities. He gave an example of off-road motorcycles being driven towards cars and people feeling terrorised. He suggested the Head of School Improvement & Inclusion raise these issues in her meetings with colleagues.

A Member referred to the new ALN Bill and commented that this was a massive change for schools on how they worked in this area and enquired if the policies, procedures and appropriate training for schools was in place in readiness for the implementation of the Act. The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion said the Inclusion team had worked hard, particularly with ALN Co-ordinators, so they understood what was needed in relation to the new ALN requirements, particularly around the Individual Development Plans (IDP's). The ALN Co-ordinators had responsibility for training other staff and Tredegar Comprehensive School had been commissioned to support Headteachers and Senior Leadership Teams over the next academic year with regard to processes etc. The Inclusion Team and ALN support workers were all fully trained on the requirements of the Act and were able to support Blaenau Gwent schools. The EAS had trained all their Challenge Advisors who would be School Improvement Partners from September and they would also be able to support teachers and senior leaders.

The Corporate Director of Education said that in relation to ALN reform a report had previously been presented to the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee around ALN readiness from a Blaenau Gwent perspective. The Welsh Government were taking a pragmatic approach from September around ALN implementation which he felt would be well received across the sector. In relation to capacity within the Education Directorate the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion would be working full-time for the Council from 1st September, 2021, and he felt there was sufficient capacity within the team to roll out ALN reform. He reassured Members that recruitment to the vacant post of Service Manager Inclusion was planned for the autumn term.

The Chair enquired if it would be beneficial for the EAS to add a standard item on ALN and new reforms to the agenda

<p>for Governing Body meetings. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion would discuss this with Governor Services.</p>	
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<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report as presented be accepted.</p>	
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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Joint Education and Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee – 14th July 2021

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
	Letter to be sent to Alan Williams, thanking him for his contribution to the Scrutiny Committee.	Democratic Team	Letter sent on 15 th July 2021.
	Vacant position for co-optee. Education Directorate to contact the Diocese to seek a nominee.	Lynn Phillips	Co-optee position has been filled. The representative will attend meetings from June 2022 onwards, following Induction Programme.
7	<p><u>Safeguarding Performance Information for Social Services and Education</u></p> <p>Members requested, at the appropriate time, that a report is brought to this Committee re Contextual Safeguarding.</p> <p>Information to be provided on the number of schools who had obtained the anti-bullying quality mark, including the Rights Respecting Schools quality mark.</p> <p>A Member sought clarification on the numbers referred to in paragraph 6.3.7 – Operation Encompass.</p>	<p>Damien McCann</p> <p>Luisa Munroe-Morris</p> <p>Luisa Munroe-Morris</p>	<p>The Director of Social Services will prepare a report on contextualised safeguarding for the next meeting of the Committee following the autumn school term.</p> <p>One school has received an anti-bullying quality mark – Tredegar Comprehensive School.</p> <p>The number of children involved is different to the number of occurrences as more than one child can be linked to any one occurrence. The total number of children categorised as being at high, medium or standard risk is based on a specific risk assessment being completed as part of the police</p>

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
	A Member referred to Operation Encompass and enquired on the type of referrals that were received.	Luisa Munroe-Morris	<p>response. Not all occurrences had this risk assessment completed. Of those occurrences where the risk assessment was completed, 4 children were linked to high risk occurrences, 21 to medium risk and 95 to standard risk. (See <i>attached</i>)</p> <p>An Operation Encompass update will be sent to the relevant school/s where police have attended to an incident of domestic violence in a family that attends that school/s. The Operation Encompass update will be received by the school by 8:00 a.m. to ensure that the school is prepared to support the relevant children and family.</p>

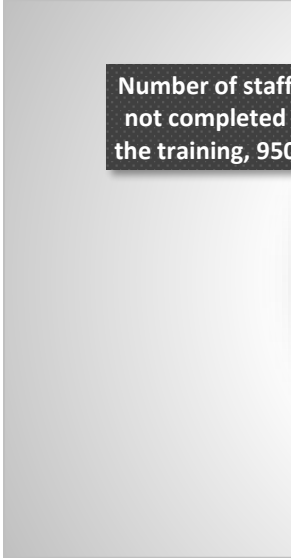
Operation Encompass Data

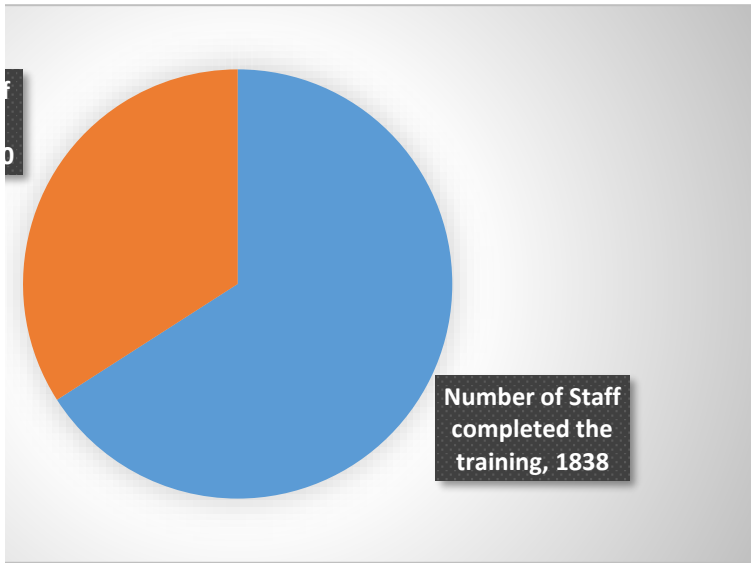
	1 Jan-31 Mar 2020	1 Apr-31 Aug 2020
No. of incidents	158	296
No. of children (3-18)	202	351
% PPN's with school name	81%	69.60%
REPEAT: No of children at more than one incident this month	26/202 (12.9%)	76/351 (21.6%)
% Children present at incident*	80/128 (62.5%)	133/206 (64.5%)
RISK**: No. of PPN (no.children) High	144/158 with DASH 5 (5)	272/296 with DASH 2 (4)
* child present: this is based on only those incident that have recorded a school name and the officer left the box blank . Or some children were present but the school name hasn't been added		
** Risk: is based on those with a DASH completed. Current not 100% of incidents have a DASH.		

1 Sept-31 Dec 2020	1 Jan-31 Mar 2021
242	141
269	185
78.10%	66%
60/269 (22.3%)	25/185 (13.5%)
112/269 (41.6%)	59/185 (31.8%)
215/242 with DASH (9)	117/141 with DASH (4)

*officer ticked 'YES' in the child present box . Some children may have been present but the
ed so this field wasn't completed.*

Number of Staff completed the training	Number of staff not completed the training
1838	950





Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Joint Education and Learning and Social Services Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **21st January 2022**

Report Subject: **Contextual Safeguarding**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
		12.01.22			21.01.22			

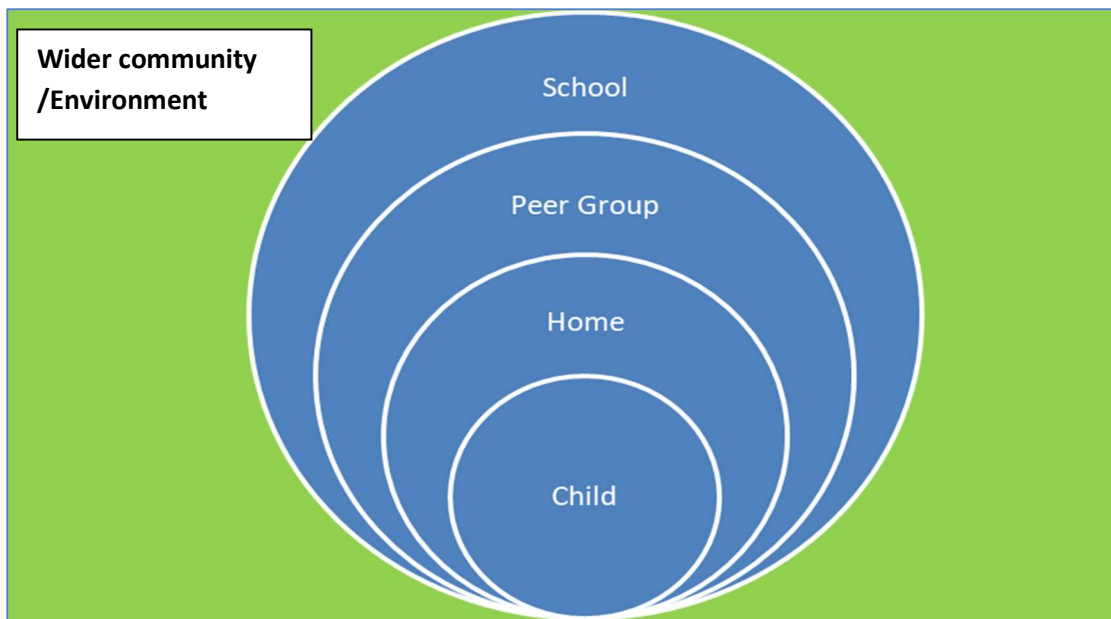
1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to Members the concept of Contextual safeguarding and the approach being taken across Gwent and Wales.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Contextual Safeguarding is an approach and a term developed by Dr Carlene Firmin and colleagues at University of Bedfordshire. Dr Firmin, has shone a light on 'harmful environments' existing outside of the home and called for the rewriting of current child protection rules.
- 2.2 Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that as young people grow and develop they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family. For example, in school or college, in the local community, in their peer groups or online. Children and young people may encounter risk in any of these environments. Sometimes the different contexts are inter-related and can mean that children and young people may encounter multiple risks.
- 2.3 Contextual safeguarding looks at how we can best understand these risks, engage with children and young people and help to keep them safe. It's an approach that's often been used to apply to adolescents, though the lessons can equally be applied to younger children, especially in today's changing world. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

2.4 Figure 1 Context interplay



2.5 Not all the risks that young people face will happen within their family or home and that's where contextual safeguarding comes in. The children and young people may be exposed to harm in different environments. And their experiences may also influence the way they behave and live their lives in other situations.

2.6 As an example, overcrowding at home means the young person spends a lot of time out in public spaces. When in those places, the young person is experiencing robbery and violence. These violent incidents impact the behaviour of this young person, and many others in school. The inability of the school to respond effectively further normalises violence amongst peer groups at the school. These peer groups have more influence over the young person's behaviour than their parents – and impacts the capacity of the parents to safeguard their child from the harm they experience in (and the pull of) public and peer spaces. We must not forget to consider online environments too. These might be related, for example gangs using social media to track or groom young people, but they will have an influence on children and young people. Every situation and context is different but whatever the issues and problems, contextual safeguarding aims to help provide an approach to help keep children and young people safe.

2.7 Context, therefore, is important for how we understand children's experiences of extra familial harm. Extra-familial contexts characterise:

- (i) where the harm occurs;
- (ii) where protective and harmful relationships form;
- (iii) the limitations of parenting as a source of protection; and
- (iv) a blurring of the lines between victimisation and perpetration.

- 2.8 Extending the remit of traditional child/family protection models and responding to young people's experience of harm outside of the home, has far reaching implications for child protection practice and processes, and adoption and implementation of a Contextual Safeguarding approach varies significantly across the UK. Its approach has been in the main adopted in some of the inner London Boroughs and large urban cities across the UK.
- 2.9 For Contextual Safeguarding to be identified in a local area, the safeguarding systems must be able to:
- a) Target extra-familial contexts and relationships: proactively identify these contexts/relationships; accept them as referrals, assess them and intervene with them in accordance with a plan. This work runs alongside any direct work with children and families.
 - b) Reduce extra-familial risks through a child protection lens: in this sense policing disruption or community safety work may feature in interventions, but they are overseen by social work and driven by a primary goal to safeguard the welfare of children (rather than solely reduce crime) – as they would do when working with families.
 - c) Demonstrate active partnerships with those agencies who have reach into extra-familial settings: this includes partnerships between children's social care and sports/leisure, parks and recreation, licensing, private businesses, schools, youth clubs and young people/parents themselves.
 - d) Measure success by a reduction in contextual risk: outcomes are monitored not solely on behaviour change in young people but in reported sense of safety in extra-familial settings or wider datasets (such as behaviour logs in schools or crime/survey data) that suggest safety is increasing in contexts where young people were encountering harm.
- 2.10 When operationalised a Contextual Safeguarding framework it allows an area to do two things which feed into one another:
- 1) Recognise contextual risks during child and family work: record contextual issues related to referrals for children and families; collect information about extra-familial risks during child and family assessments, and; where extra-familial concerns are identified refer these in for their own consideration (as per tier 2 below);
 - 2) Address contextual risk: Accept referrals for peer groups, schools and public space; screen these referrals against contextual thresholds; subject them to assessment (and identify if they are a context in which children are in need of support or experiencing significant harm); discuss this assessment at a multi-agency safeguarding meeting, and; action a plan to reduce the risk in these contexts. These actions feed back into the individual child and family assessments/plans for young people affected by that context.

- 2.11 The way a local area achieves this will differ related to local demographics as well as the partnerships and operating systems used by children's social care and their partners. As such Contextual Safeguarding is not a model. It is an approach that extends the parameters of traditional child protection systems, and its methods of referral, assessment, planning and intervention, to extra-familial settings and relationships.
- 2.12 Gwent Safeguarding Board is in discussion with Welsh Government and the other 5 Regional Safeguarding Boards in Wales are exploring the potential merits and other implications of this approach.
- 2.13 The Gwent Safeguarding Board has collated some introductory information on Contextual Safeguarding, which features video's, other resources and sources of information. As part of the Board's professionals and partnership network, the Board provided some 'Bite-size' Learning initiatives earlier in July 2021. (see link to websites below)

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

Scrutiny are asked to accept the report as provided.

Option 2

To seek further clarification on any areas within the report and/or to highlight any areas of interest or concern that need to be considered further.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The Safeguarding agenda is considered as part of the Council's Corporate Strategies that includes:

- Corporate Plan;
- Single Integrated Plan;
- Corporate Risk Register;
- Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy;
- Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy.

Social Services work to a number of regional and national safeguarding procedures which can be located on the South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board website: <http://sewsc.org.uk>

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

The contextual safeguarding approach is currently being assessed by the Welsh Government and the regions, if introduced locally it would require additional resources.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The Directorate Risk register identifies the highest risks for the Social Services Department. These are monitored as part of the quarterly report of the Director of Social Services.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implication within this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

There are no supporting information or data within this report.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Those children who are assessed to be at risk of harm are protected and safeguarded, and that the Local Authority adheres to legislation regarding statutory intervention.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental Safeguarding Leads meetings help ensure all departments within the Authority are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and are kept updated with any emerging issues or trends within safeguarding.

The SEWSCB local Safeguarding Network group also reviews the safeguarding information to ensure all partner agencies are as fully aware as possible.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF) enables Social Services to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The work undertaken by the Social Services Directorate looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having a proactive rather than reactive approach to service planning can also help with planning resources.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board and its sub groups ensure a multi-agency collaborative approach to safeguarding. Blaenau Gwent fully participates in the Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

All local authorities and partner agencies work together on safeguarding through the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

Not applicable.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

Safeguarding children can have an impact on ensuring those children who require to be safeguarded can thrive and grow and hopefully fulfil their ambitions, gaining skills and employment reducing socio-economic disadvantages.

6.9b ***Equality Impact Assessment***

Not applicable.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Local Safeguarding Network Group is a sub group of the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board. This group is made up of multi-agency representation from within Blaenau Gwent who monitors and reviews the safeguarding information and performance.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *University of Bedfordshire:* <https://www.csnetwork.org.uk/en/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>

Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Joint Social Services & Education and Learning (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **21st January 2022**

Report Subject: **Safeguarding Performance Information for Social Services and Education – 1st April to 30th September 2021**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services and Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**

Report submitted by: **Alison Ramshaw, Service Manager, Children’s Services and Michelle Jones, Strategic Education Improvement Manager**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
17.12.21	23.12.21	12.01.22			21.01.22	02.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide scrutiny members with safeguarding performance information and analysis from Children’s Social Services and Education from 1st April 2021 to the 30th September 2021. Monitoring and reporting systems are well developed to ensure the department is able to track information and evidences that the safeguarding agenda remains a priority for the local authority.

The information provided will enable members to identify safeguarding trends and areas within the Authority that require further development to improve safeguarding practice in order to meet the safeguarding needs of children and young people within Blaenau Gwent.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The report contains safeguarding information from Social Services from 1st April 2020 – 30th September, 2021 and Education information from 1st April to 31st July 2021.

2.2 This report is written in order to provide a greater focus on the safeguarding agenda. The Corporate Leadership Team and Elected Members agreed for safeguarding information to be reported to a Joint Social Services /Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee after each school term.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Having scrutinised the information members can

Option 1

Accept the approach and information detailed in the report provided.

Option 2

Consider the information provided and provide comments on where improvement can be made to the current monitoring processes.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The Safeguarding agenda is considered as part of the Council's Corporate Strategies that includes:

- Corporate Improvement Plan
- Single Integrated Plan
- Corporate Risk Register
- Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy
- Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy

Social Services work to a number of regional and national safeguarding procedures which can be located on the South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board website: <http://sewsc.org.uk>

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There is no impact on the budget both in the short and long

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The Directorate Risk register identifies the highest risks for the Social Services Department. These are monitored as part of the quarterly report of the Director of Social Services.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data (see Appendix 1)**

6.2 **Social Services**

6.2.1 **Referrals to Social Services**

Figure 1:1 Shows the number of referrals made to social services. The chart demonstrates a slight increase in referrals between Q3 (1,363) and Q4 (1,368), a significant increase in Q1 (1823), with a decrease in Q2 (1578). The data indicates no levelling off of referral rates although there was a slight decrease in Q2. However, despite this, referrals remain high across all Q's compared to previous years. The referral rates are currently being monitored and similar pictures have been observed across neighbouring authorities.

Figure 1.2: Shows the source of the referrals. As in previous quarters, police remain the highest referring agency (35% in Q3, 36% in Q4, 35% in Q1 and 44% in Q4), followed by Health (15%) and followed by Individuals (10%).

Figure 1.3: shows the numbers of referrals received into the department on open cases. During Q4 the number increased to 1055 from 981 in Q3, further increased to 1404 in Q1 and decreased to 1234 in Q2. Again, this situation continues to be monitored regularly

6.2.2 **Youth Services**

Figure 1.4: Shows the numbers of youth service referrals over the past 6 quarters. The figure shows an increase in referrals between Q3 (7) and Q2 (11).

The Youth Service is an active partner on the Space Wellbeing Panel, they sit on the Steering Group as part of the Families First model and they actively participate in the South East Wales Safeguarding Local Network meetings. Multi agency working and close partnership arrangements with the Youth Service ensure that safeguarding is prioritised. All Youth Service staff are expected to keep up to date with safeguarding trainings offered by Gwent Safeguarding Board and trained secured by the Youth Service ensuring that knowledge of issues that impact on safeguarding is current and up to date.

6.2.3 **Child Protection**

Figure 2.2: Gives a summary of the number of children on the child protection register and the numbers of registrations and deregistration is also included. There were a total of 68 children on the child protection register in Q3 to 33 families. This was a decrease of 8 from the previous quarter. The numbers of children on the child protection register decreased by a further 16 to 52 in Q4 involving 24 families.

Q1 saw 61 children on the child protection register to 30 families, which was an increase of 9 from the previous quarter. The number of children increased to 68 in Q4 to 30 families.

68 in Q3 (2020)
52 in Q4 (2021)
61 in Q1 (2021)
68 in Q2 (2021)

Children's services have been using a strengths based model of assessment and intervention and this has proved very successful in how social workers intervene with families. The strengths based model requires assessments to consider what is working well within the family and what matters to families in respect of change. Risk management is a contributing factor in the assessments and is having a very positive outcome when engaging with all family members. Whilst we have seen a small rise in Q2 there is nothing to suggest the LA need to review its practice as the numbers have remained stable throughout all the Q's.

Figure 2.5: shows the average time a child is on the CPR. The Social Services senior management team review all those children on the CPR for 12 months or longer to ensure there is no unnecessary drift. The data provided does not give rise to concern and is as expected.

Figure 2.6: gives the breakdown on both initial and review conferences. They show the numbers of conferences held the number of families involved and the outcomes in terms of registered or not.

The numbers of initial conferences held in Q3 decreased to 28 children to 12 families. Of the 28 children subject to child protection case conference 27 were registered.

53 review conferences were held in Q3. 26 children continued registration with 27 who ceased to be registered.

The numbers of initial conferences held in Q4 decreased to 13 children to 8 families. Of the 13 children subject to child protection case conference 12 were registered.

55 review conferences were held in Q4. 29 children continued registration with 26 who ceased to be registered.

The numbers of initial conferences increased in Q1 to 24 children to 14 families. Of the 24 children subject to child protection case conference 20 were registered.

33 review conferences were held in Q1, 21 children continued registration with 12 children who ceased to be registered.

The numbers of initial conferences held in Q2 increased to 26 children to 13 families. Of the 26 children subject to child protection case conference 24 were registered.

41 review conferences were held in Q2 and 24 children continued registration with 17 who ceased to be registered.

Figure 2.7: shows the number of initial conferences held within timescales. There has been consistent practice in this area throughout, Q3, Q4, and Q1 with 100% of conferences held within timescales. Q2 saw a slight decline to 96% of conferences held within timescales.

Figure 2.8: relates to review conferences and the percentage held within timescale shows 100% for Q4 and Q1, 96.2% for Q3 and 95.1 for Q2. The data provided does not give rise to concern.

6.3 **Education Information**

6.3.1 **Overview**

Blaenau Gwent Council and Education Directorate is committed to ensuring that Safeguarding in Education processes are robust, fit for purpose and are being consistently applied. Through this report Scrutiny Members are provided with an overview of the extensive work that is undertaken in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements give no cause for concern and fulfil the requirements as set out in the Estyn framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES). Moving forward the Directorate intends to review the data presented to this committee and as such it is likely that further reports will encapsulate a broader data set which will include training take up, safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable learners etc.

April 2021 to July 2021

Schools continued to be impacted by the pandemic and whilst they have remained predominantly open, some settings have been impacted by a degree of closure/blended learning, which has continued to impact upon the business as usual activities. However, Members will be aware that schools have continued to respond to the emergency and below is a more detailed report capturing the majority of data sets.

6.3.2 **Bullying Incidents and Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI)**

6.3.3 **Numbers of restrictive physical interventions**

Systems are in place within the Local Authority to gather incidents when Restrictive Physical Interventions (Figure 4.1) are used in school to manage pupils' behaviour. Following each incident, the school is required to record the incident in a Bound and Numbered book and complete an incident form. The incident form is sent to the Local Authority Education Directorate where it is recorded on a central recording system.

Figure 4.1: number of RPIs used in school during the Summer Term 2021.

The number of RPIs reported to the Local Authority in the Summer term was 15 This is an increase compared to the figures reported since the onset of Covid-19 in March 2020. During the first lockdown period, in the summer term of 2020, there were 2 reported RPIs, 11 during the autumn term 2020 and 3 during the second lockdown period in the spring term 2021. Given the disruption to school operations during this period, it is not possible to make comparisons with previous data.

In June this year, the Equality and Human Rights Commission has published their report: 'Restraint in Schools inquiry: using meaningful data to protect children's rights'. The inquiry looked at:

- whether and how schools are collecting, recording and using data on their use of restraint and restrictive interventions
- what schools can learn from places that routinely record, monitor and analyse this data and use it to make changes to their approach

The commission has also published case studies of good practice for schools to use.

Termly monitoring of incident forms is undertaken by the Safeguarding in Education Manager to ensure the use of physical intervention is appropriate.

6.3.4 **Numbers of bullying incidents reported which have led to exclusions:**

Bullying has been identified by children and young people as a significant issue they face. An anti-bullying strategy has been developed by the Education Department.

Figure 4.2 shows that between April 2021 and July 2021 there were no exclusions from school where bullying was recorded as the primary reason for the exclusion. There have been no exclusions from school for bullying since the summer term 2019.

6.3.5 **Quality Assurance Meetings**

The Education Directorate has developed a quality assurance process across Local Government Education settings (LGES) which has been in place since September 2017.

Quality assurance visits to Local Government Education Settings (LGSES) have included pupil and staff voice through pupil and staff discussions, scrutiny of training, policy, safe recruitment practice, and record-keeping of concerns. A "dip test of activity" is undertaken by the Safeguarding in Education Manager to test the robustness of the safeguarding systems and to ascertain a level of assurance. As a result of COVID disruption, these visits have been amended and now take the form of virtual meetings.

Members will be aware through a report to this Committee that this protocol was recently reviewed and learning from visits and broader safeguarding issues has continued to inform the focus of the Safeguarding in Education Managers work.

During the Summer Term 2021, 6 quality assurance meetings took place. Of these 4 were with schools, 1 with Early Years, Childcare and Play and 1 with Cleaning. 3 quality assurance visits had been projected for this period. No significant safeguarding issues were identified during these meetings, providing reassurance that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Schools have also engaged well with the termly meeting for designated safeguarding persons, with 88% of schools being represented at the meeting in the Summer term.

6.3.6 **Estyn Judgements**

Scrutiny members will be aware of the Estyn framework for schools which changed in 2017, and that Inspection area 4 covers the safeguarding element. In arriving at a judgement for this Inspection area within 4.3, inspectors will consider whether the schools safeguarding arrangements are effective and give no cause for concern. In coming to a judgment, inspectors will consider a multitude of evidence such as;

- whether the schools safeguarding arrangements protect all children and young people;
- the arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers;
- how well the school promotes safe practices and a culture of safety;
- whether the school complies with statutory guidance in discharging its safeguarding functions;
- the arrangements of the management of bullying, harassment and discrimination, and the reporting of physical interventions;
- how well the school keeps pupil safe from radicalisation;
- arrangements for the provision of pupils educated off site and;
- the health and safety of the school buildings and site.

Figure 4.4: - provides an overview of the Estyn judgements for schools inspected under the new arrangements from September 2017 up until March 2021. Estyn inspections have been suspended during the pandemic and therefore there is no change in the data in this report. However, moving forward it is anticipated that Estyn visits will commence early in 2022, with monitoring visits for schools in a category already taking place.

The table evidences that care support and guidance arrangements in nearly the majority of schools (5/9) are good or better, with 4 schools receiving adequate judgements. All schools inspected during the period were

assessed as having suitable arrangements for safeguarding in place that meet requirements and give no cause for concern

6.3.7 **Operation Encompass**

Figure 4.5 - shows the number of domestic abuse incidents reported during the period. During the period there were 296 occurrences involving 371 children. From the data received for this period, it is not possible to break this down further to understand the age profile of the children affected as to whether there is any identifiable trend involving children of a particular age group, which may provide further context in respect of the incidents reported.

Of these (371) children, 19.9% experienced repeat incidents during the period.

Risk is assessed on a case by case basis by a professional against a risk tool known as the Dash checklist. The purpose of the Dash risk checklist provides a consistent and simple tool for practitioners who work with adult victims of domestic abuse in order to help them identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to a MARAC meeting in order to manage their risk.

For this period the Police have not provided the breakdown of incidents on a risk basis (high to Low risk)

6.3.8 **Compliance Reporting**

The Police compliance target for recording the school name on the PPN is 90%. At the end of the current period the compliance rating in Blaenau Gwent has improved to a rate of 76.7% from 75%.

6.3.9 **Elected Home Educated (EHE):**

Elective home education (EHE) is when parents decide to provide home based education for their child rather than sending them to school. Home educated children are therefore not registered at mainstream or special schools.

There has been an increase in numbers over this period due to the Covid pandemic and when schools returned in September 2020 there were a number of parents that deregistered their children stating Covid anxiety. Other reasons for elective home education include cultural reasons and mental health issues.

In Blaenau Gwent we have worked closely with our elective home educated cases to ensure that home visits are undertaken to offer support, advice and guidance., At the time of PLASC on 26th January 2021, 75% of families in Blaenau Gwent had received a visit in the last 12 months (16th January 2020 – 26th January 2021) compared to the Wales average of 53%. It is

anticipated that the appointment of an EWO for elective home education, which is funded by WG, will increase the number of visits undertaken.

From a safeguarding point there are bi-monthly meetings between education, health, social services and police to discuss any new electively home educated pupils and those families that refuse home visits.

Figure 4.6 - The total number of children electively home educated as of 31st July 2021 was 102. At the same point in 2020 the number was 55.

Figure 4.7 - sets out the number of secondary age pupils who have become EHE or who have returned to school from being EHE during the Autumn, Spring and Summer term. There is an increase of 7 pupils coming out of school when compared to the data for the previous term.

Figure 4.8 - sets out the number of additional pupils who have become EHE or who have returned to school from being EHE during the Autumn, Spring and Summer term. There is an increase of 10 pupils coming out of school when compared to the data for the previous two terms.

Figure 4.9 - provides a breakdown by year group of EHE pupils. The numbers of pupils in KS4 is the highest which is similar to the pattern across Wales where KS4 is the highest.

Members should note that there are appropriate processes in place to monitor elective home education with formal visits held to check on the suitability of education. However, whilst the number of EHE pupils overall has seen an increase this is similar to the rest of Wales.

6.4 Corporate – Education

6.4.1 DBS Escalations

Figure 5.1.1 provides the DBS escalations for the period. Within the Education Directorate there are well established escalation process that are in place to manage any noncompliance issues with DBS or registration with EWC. This information along with other data such as training uptake, policy adoption etc. is held on the Directorate Safeguarding matrix that is monitored by the Safeguarding in Education Manager who produces a Fade report for consideration by Education DMT on a termly basis.

6.4.2 VAWDASV

Figure 5.3.2 - provides the training uptake for Group 1 training by schools. This confirms that the current level of take up is 73%

VAWDASV training compliance is regularly shared with education settings and advice provided regarding training completion.

7.1 Expected outcome for the public

Those children who are assessed to be at risk of harm are protected and safeguarded, and that the Local Authority adheres to legislation regarding statutory intervention.

7.2 Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental Safeguarding Leads meetings have been reconvened in 2021 and will help to ensure all departments within the Authority are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and are kept updated with any emerging issues or trends within safeguarding.

Termly meetings also take place with the Safeguarding Leads from all the schools and monthly meetings take place between the safeguarding team and lead education staff.

The SEWSCB local Safeguarding Network group also reviews the safeguarding information to ensure all partner agencies are as fully aware as possible.

7.3 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

The Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF) enables Social Services to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.

7.4 Preventative focus

The work undertaken by the Social Services Directorate looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having a proactive rather than reactive approach to service planning can also help with planning resources.

Providing this report and the level of detailed safeguarding information to Scrutiny Committee enables members to ensure risks are identified and acted on.

7.5 Collaboration / partnership working

The South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board and its sub groups ensure a multi-agency collaborative approach to safeguarding. Blaenau Gwent fully participates in the Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards.

Additionally, the Corporate Safeguarding Policy ensures each department has safeguarding leads and these meet together on a quarterly basis looking at safeguarding across the whole Authority. The Leisure Trust lead also participates in this meeting.

Throughout the Q's partnership working with the police and statutory partners continued to progress. The Hub model is working well, with multi agency safeguarding meeting happening in a timely manner

7.6 **Integration (across service areas)**

All local authorities and partner agencies work together on safeguarding through the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board.

EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed).

N/A

8 **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Local Safeguarding Network Group is a sub group of the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board. This group is made up of multi-agency representation from within Blaenau Gwent who monitors and reviews the safeguarding information and performance. This group has direct links with the Youth Forum to ensure the voice of the child is fully considered and heard on safeguarding issues.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

*Appendix 1 – BG Safeguarding Reporting Template April 2021-Sept 2021
Final*

Appendix 2 – Anti Bullying Strategy

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Safeguarding Performance Report

Social Services

1st April 2021 to
30th September 2021

Education

Summer Term 2021

Corporate Services

1st April 2021 to
30th September 2021



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

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Purpose of the report

The council is committed to creating an environment which enables people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities whilst feeling safe and protected.

We believe that all children, adults and young people have the right to be safe from harm and it is a corporate objective to put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.

We recognise our responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk, and this includes the contribution we make to working together with other agencies so that all children and young people reach their full potential and we continue to look after the most vulnerable people in our communities.

The purpose of this report is to provide safeguarding information that is recorded and monitored to ensure that we are indeed delivering this objective.

Monitoring and reporting systems are well-developed to ensure the department is able to track information and evidences that the safeguarding agenda remains a priority for the local authority.

Performance information is collated from Social Services, Organisational Development and Education information systems which identifies activity, demands and trends of data. This includes a number of items that are statutory requirements as part of the Welsh Government Performance Framework.

The report includes information on the following:

- Referrals received and their outcomes
- Children who are being safeguarded and analysis
- Quality assurance arrangements with education settings
- Broader issues within education that impact upon safeguarding
- Corporate progress on recommended proposals for improvement
- DBS Compliance
- Safeguarding Corporate Risk Register

This report will be shared with Senior Management Teams and presented to the Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee for Social Services, Education and Active Living.

00 | Community Profile - Demographics

Community Profile



– key benefit claimants November 2016 – 20.3% in Blaenau Gwent compared to all Wales level of 14.4%.

- Total Population: **70,020** Number of 0 – 17 year olds: **13,619** (2020 Population Estimates)
- Number of Open cases to Children's Social Services as at 31st December 20: **1,108**
- Number of pupils attending primary schools: **5,911**
- Number of pupils attending secondary schools: **3,262**

- 45% of Blaenau Gwent's local areas are amongst the top 20% deprived areas in Wales. (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019)
- The proportion of benefit claimants amongst people of working age was higher in Blaenau Gwent than the proportion across the comparable authorities (working-age client group)

01 | Referrals to Social Services

Fig: 1.1 Number of referrals received by Social Services

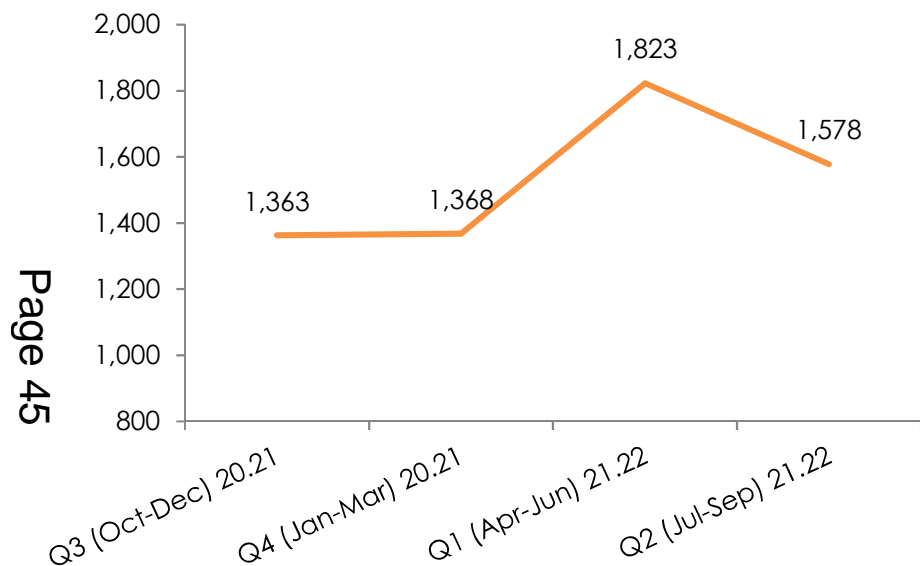
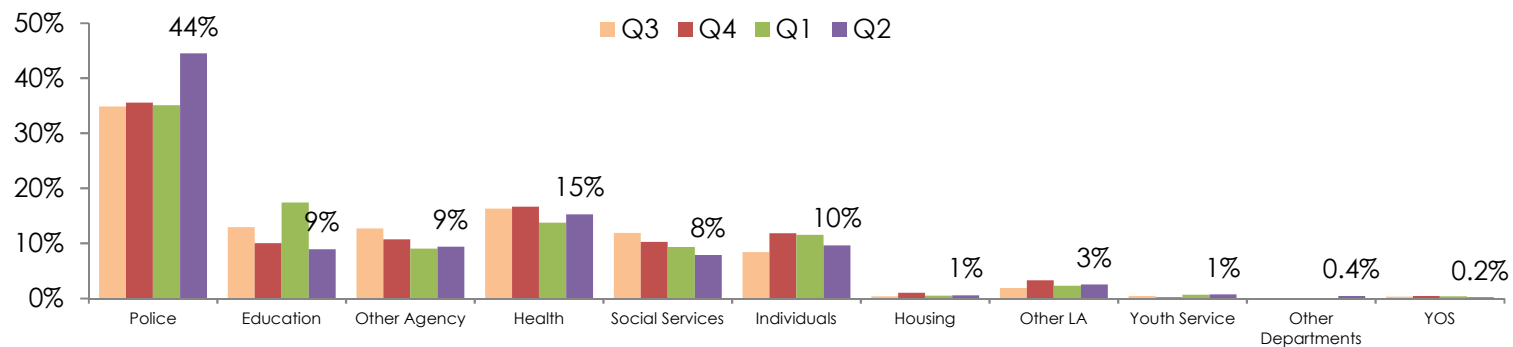


Fig: 1.2 Number and Percentage of Referrals by Source (Q1, Q2, Q3 & Q4)

	Quarter 3		Quarter 4		Quarter 1		Quarter 2	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Police	475	35%	486	36%	639	35%	702	44%
Education	158	12%	135	10%	302	17%	134	8%
Other Agency	173	13%	147	11%	165	9%	148	9%
Health	222	16%	228	17%	251	14%	241	15%
Social Services	162	12%	140	10%	170	9%	124	8%
Individuals	114	8%	162	12%	210	12%	152	10%
Education - Post 16	3	0%	2	0%	4	0%	1	0.1%
Education - OOC	15	1%	0	0%	11	1%	6	0.4%
Housing	5	0%	14	1%	9	0%	9	1%
Other LA	26	2%	45	3%	42	2%	40	3%
Youth Service	6	0%	3	0%	12	1%	11	0.7%
Other Departments	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	7	0.4%
YOS	4	0%	6	0%	7	0%	3	0.2%
Total	1,363	100%	1,368	100%	1,823	100%	1,578	100%

01 Referrals to Social Services

Graph showing the source of referrals and the percentage



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Fig: 1.3 Multi-agency referral forms (MARF's) received on open cases

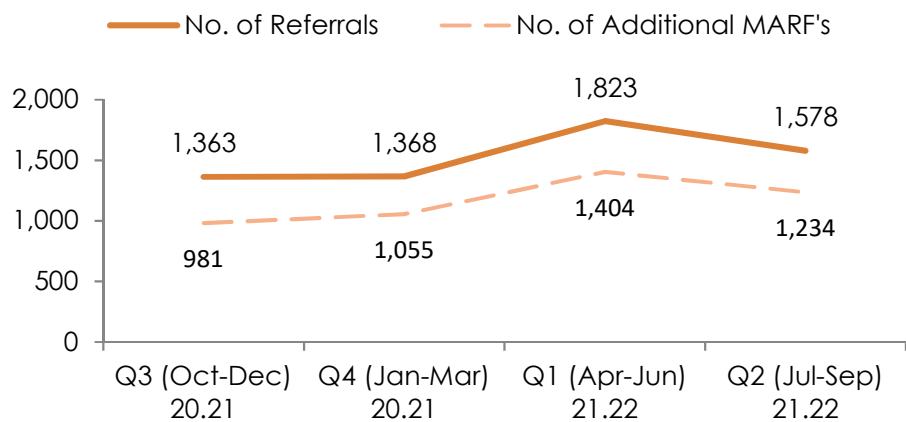
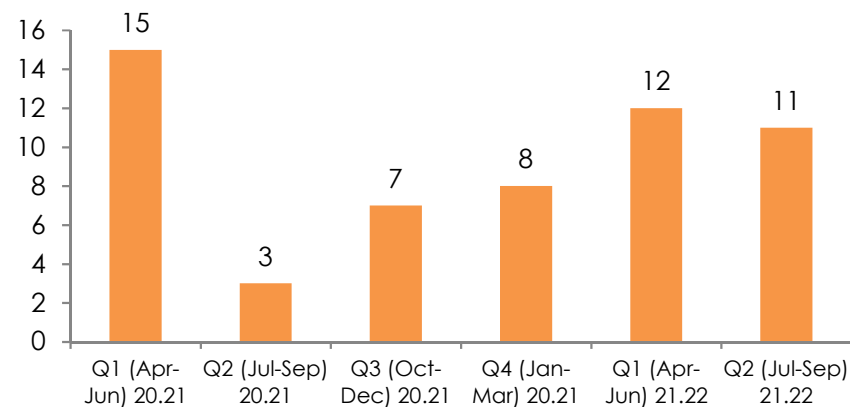


Fig: 1.4 Referrals received from Youth Services



02 | Child Protection Register

Fig 2.1 Children on the Child Protection Register

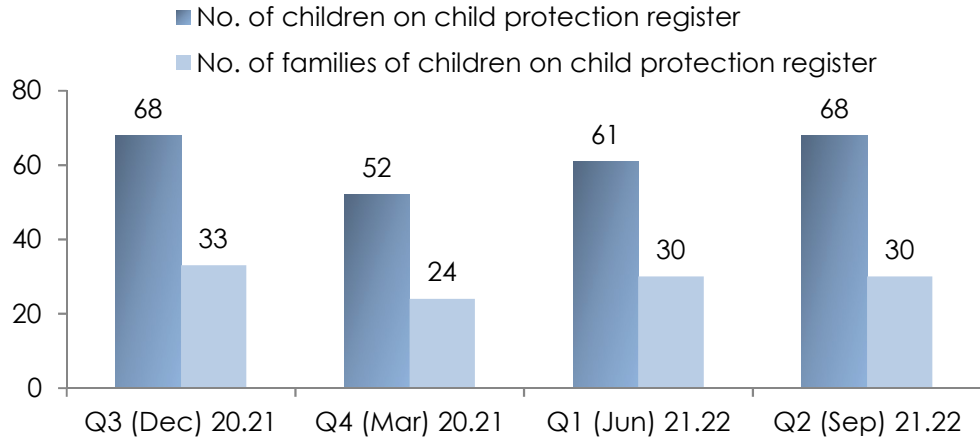
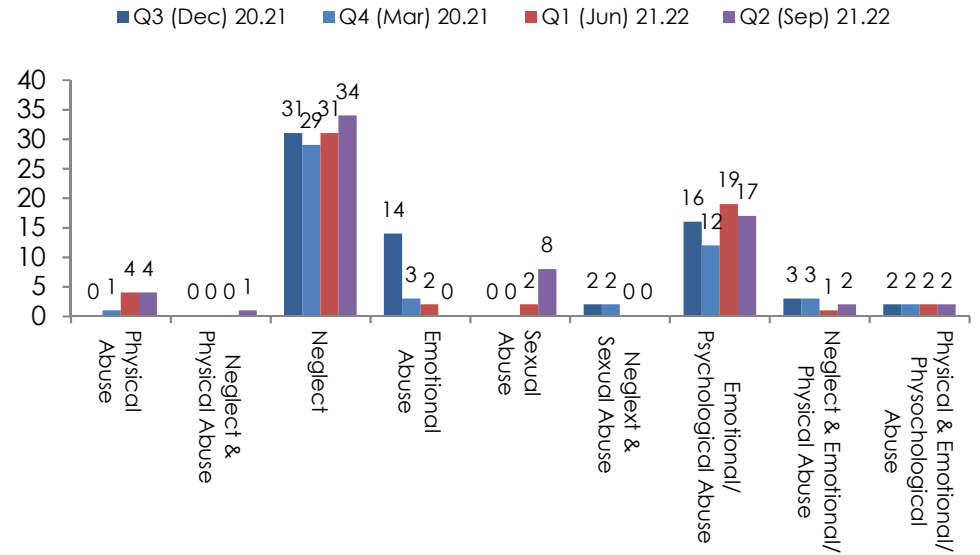


Fig 2.3 Categories of abuse



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Fig 2.2 Child Protection Register Summary

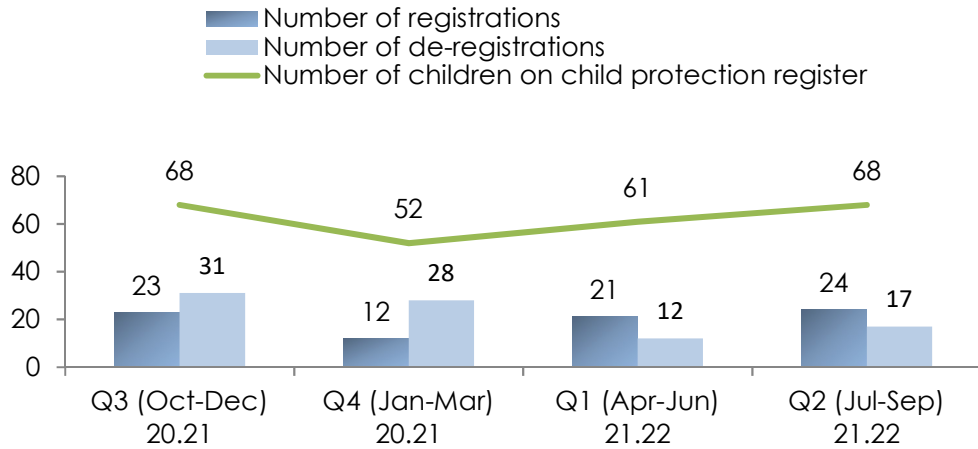
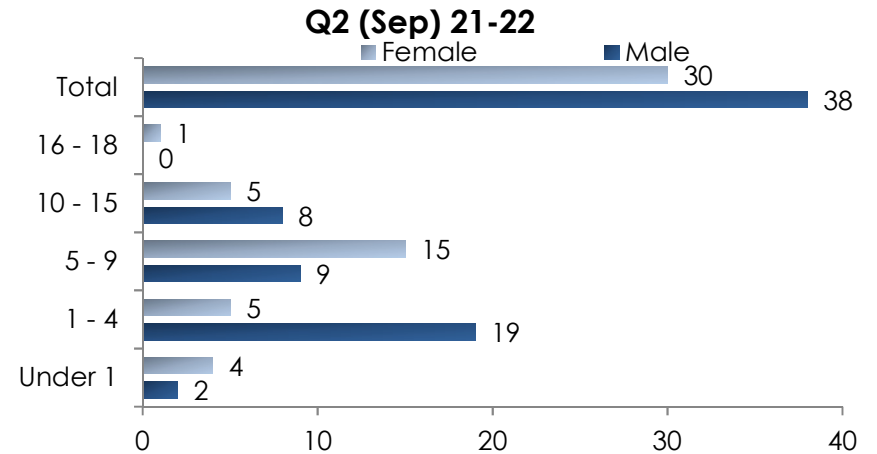


Fig 2.4 Age Breakdown of children on child protection register



02 | Child Protection Register

Fig 2.5 Average length of time on register

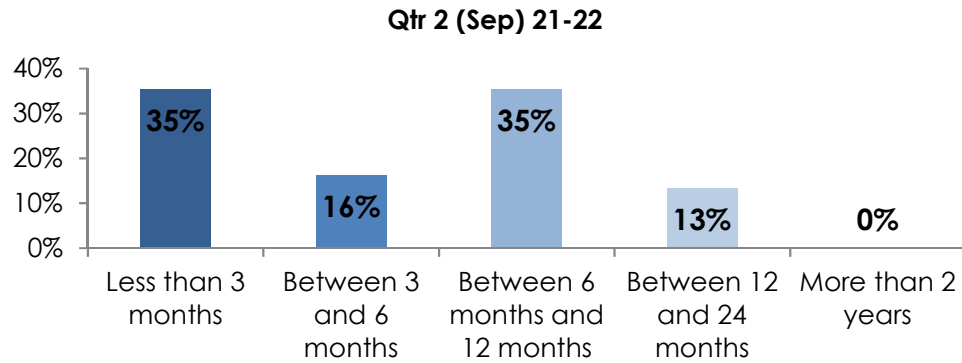


Table showing the breakdown of children on the child protection register over the last 12 months

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	Q1 (Jun) 20.21	Q2 (Sep) 20.21	Q3 (Dec) 20.21	Q4 (Mar) 20.21
Less than 3 months	23	12	20	24
Between 3 and 6 months	20	22	10	11
Between 6 months and 12 months	15	13	25	24
Between 12 and 24 months	9	4	5	9
More than 2 years	1	1	1	0
	68	52	61	68

02 | Child Protection Register

Fig 2.6: Child Protection Conferences

	Q3 (Dec) 20.21		Q4 (Mar) 20.21		Q1 (Jun) 21.22		Q2 (Sep) 21.22	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Conferences Held	81		68		57		67	
Initial Conferences	28	35%	13	19%	24	42%	26	39%
No. of Families	12		8		14		13	
Review Conferences	53	65%	55	81%	33	58%	41	61%
No. of Families	29		25		37		21	

Initial Child Protection Conferences	28		13		24		26	
<i>Outcome:</i>								
Registered	22	79%	8	62%	18	75%	23	88%
Registered at birth	5	18%	4	31%	2	8%	1	4%
Not registered	1	4%	1	8%	4	17%	2	8%

Review Child Protection Conferences	53		55		33		41	
<i>Outcome:</i>								
Continue with registration	26	49%	29	53%	21	64%	24	59%
Cease registration	27	51%	26	47%	12	36%	17	41%

02 | Child Protection Register

Fig 2.7 Initial Child Protection Conferences

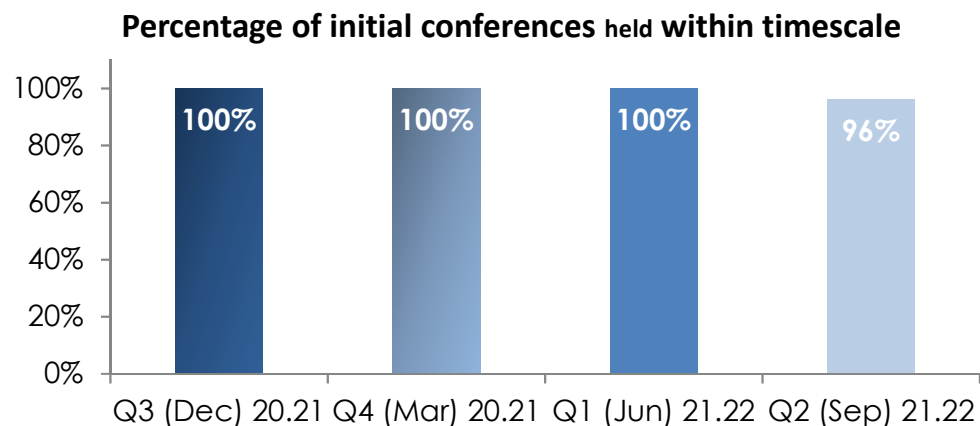
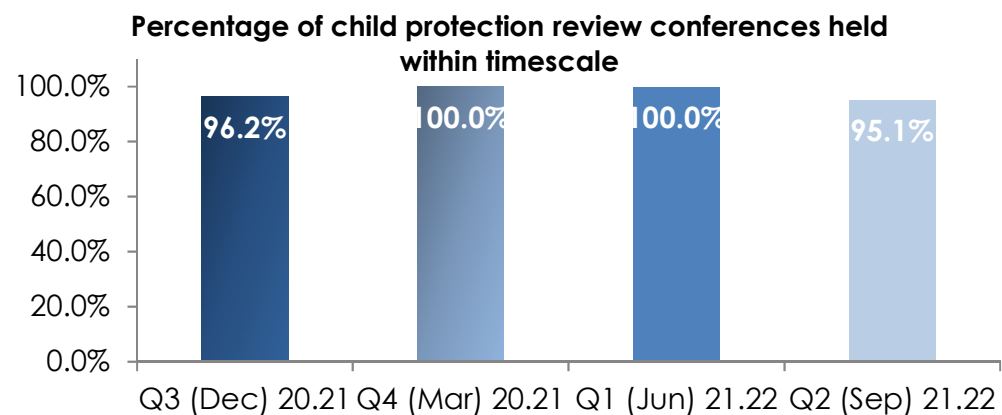


Fig: 2.8 Child Protection Review Conferences



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	Q3 (Dec) 20.21	Q4 (Mar) 20.21	Q1 (Jun) 21.22	Q2 (Sep) 21.22
Number of initial conferences held	28	13	24	26
Number of initial conferences held within 15 working days of the strategy discussion	28	13	24	25
Percentage of initial conferences held within timescale	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	96.2%

	Q3 (Dec) 20.21	Q4 (Mar) 20.21	Q1 (Jun) 21.22	Q2 (Sep) 21.22
Number of Review Child Protection Conferences held	53	55	33	41
Number of Review Child Protection Conferences held within timescale	51	55	33	39
Percentage of Review Child Protection Conferences held within timescale	96.2%	100.0%	100.0%	95.1%

03 | Referrals from Education

Fig 3.1 Contacts by Source – Primary School

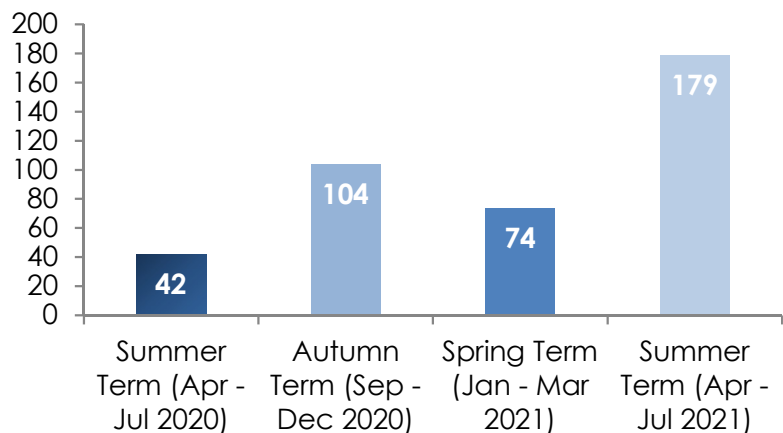
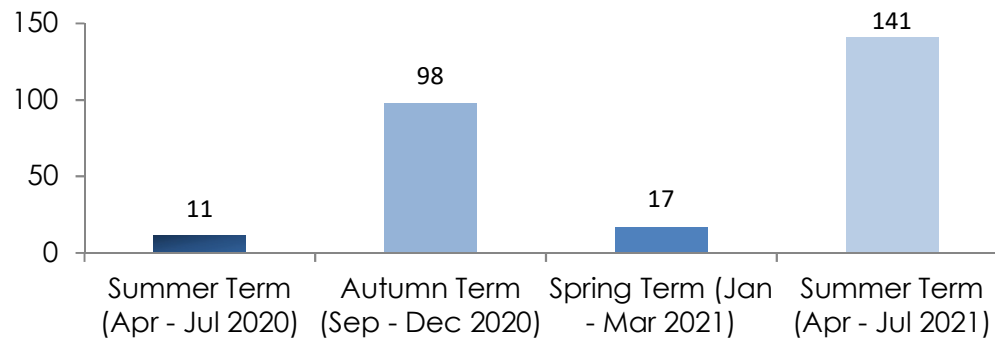
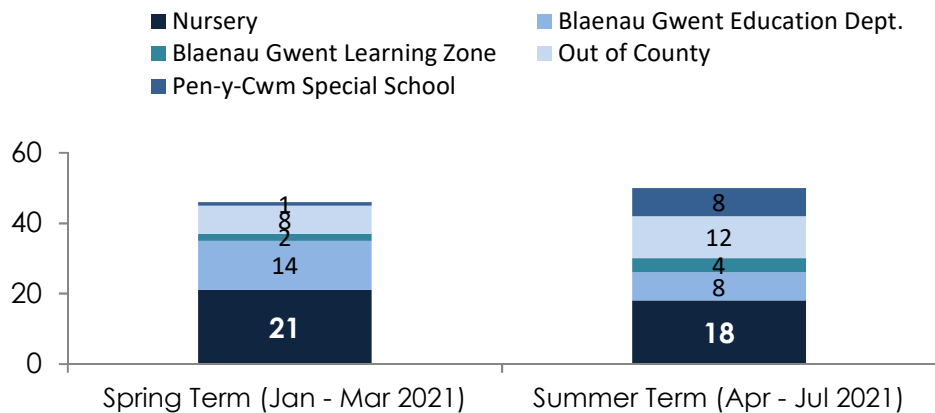


Fig 3.2 Contacts by Source – Secondary School



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Fig 3.3 Contacts by Source - Other



Attendance at schools has been severely disrupted due to the Covid pandemic. Schools have been closed for extended periods of time, repurposed, and partially opened, re-opening after February half-term. For these reasons, it is not advisable to make comparisons with performance in previous quarters, and years.

Fig: 4.1 RPI Incidents

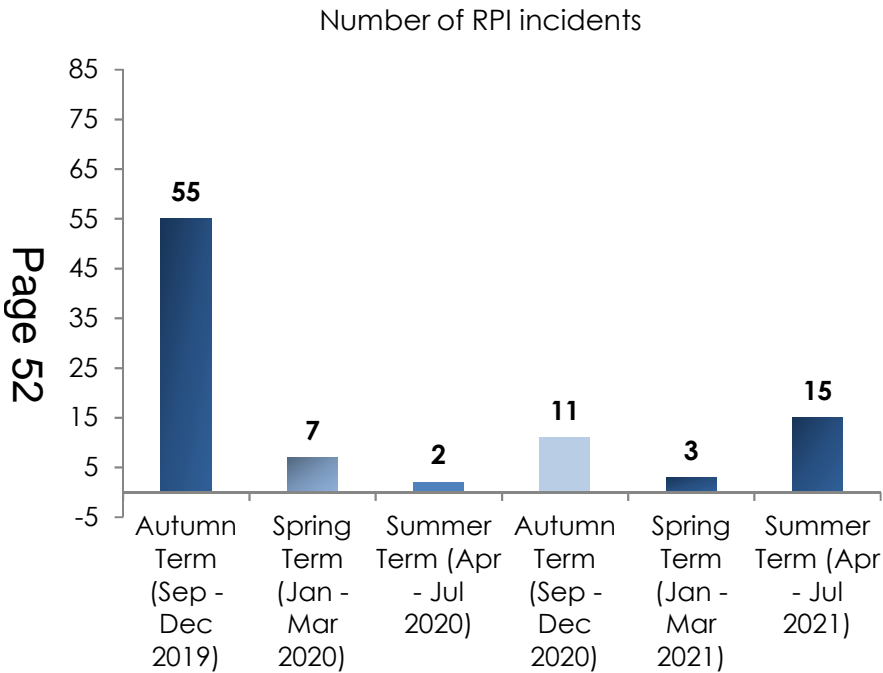


Fig: 4.2 Bullying incidents leading to exclusion

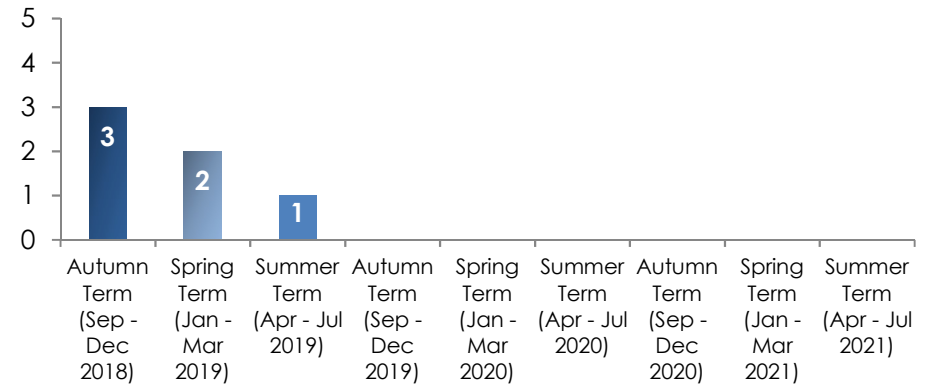
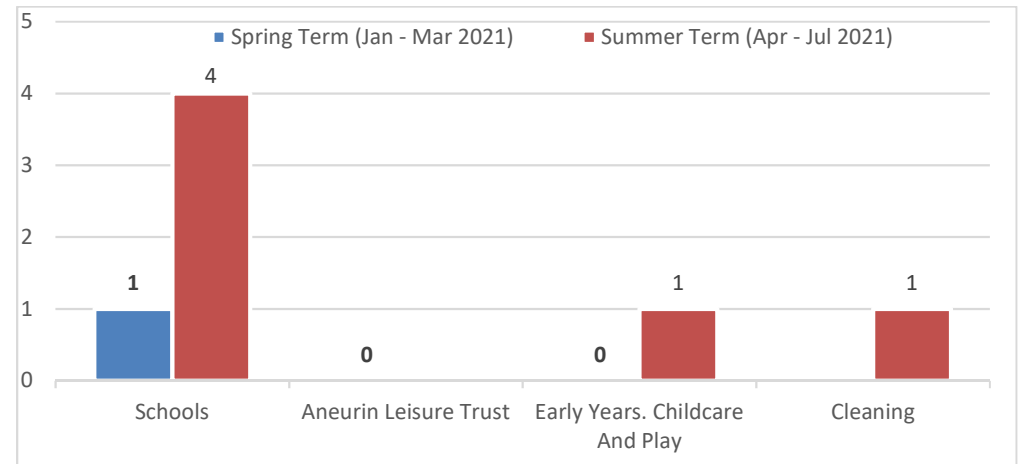


Fig 4.3 Quality Assurance Meetings



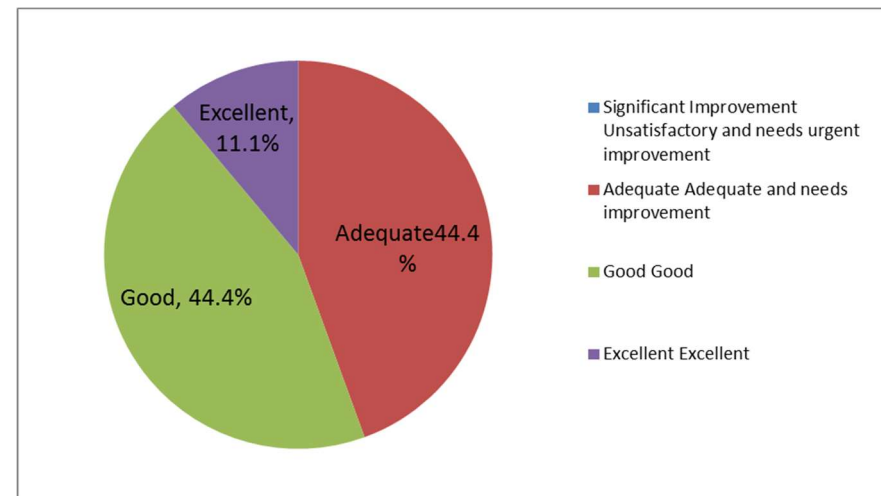
4 Estyn Judgements

The table below provides an overview of the Estyn judgements for schools inspected under the new arrangements from September 2017 up until December 2020.

Estyn Inspection Framework September 2017							Inspection Areas					
LA	Phase	School #	School	Date report Published	Follow-up Activity	Monitoring Visit 1	Standards	Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Teaching and learning experiences	Care, Support and guidance	Leadership and management	Out of Follow-up activity
BG	Secondary	6775401	Brynmawr Foundation School	Dec-19	SM		Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Adequate	Unsatisfactory	
BG	Primary	6773309	St Marys CIW Primary School	Mar-19	-		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	
BG	Primary	6772310	Rhos y Fedwen Primary **	Feb-17	Estyn Review		Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Jul-18
BG	Primary	6772310	Blaenycwm Primary	May-18	-		Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good	
BG	Secondary	6772306	Abertillery Learning Community	01/02/2018 (revisit June 19)	SI	SI	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Unsatisfactory	
BG	Primary	6774074	St. Joseph's R.C. Primary	Jan-18	-		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	
BG	Primary	6773316	St. Illtyd's Primary	01/10/2017 (revisit Mar 19)	Estyn Review	-	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Mar-19
BG	Primary	6772312	Glyncoed Primary*	Nov-17	-		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	
BG	Primary	6772309	Glanhowy Primary*	Feb-18	-		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	

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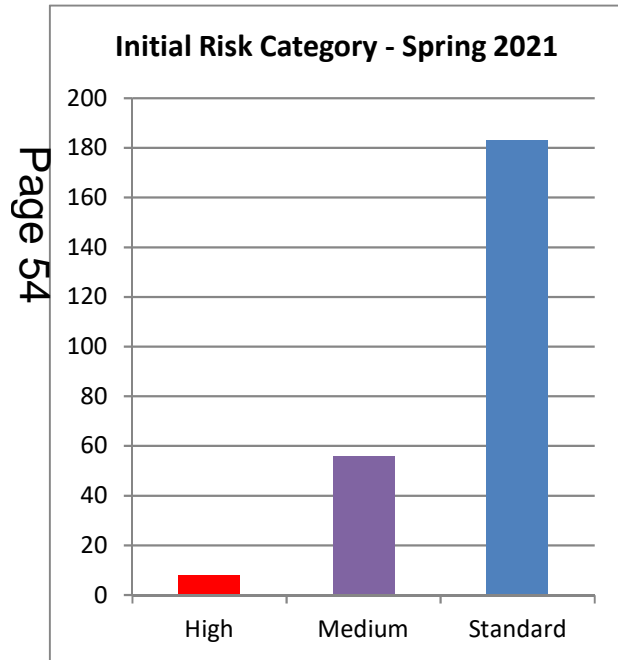
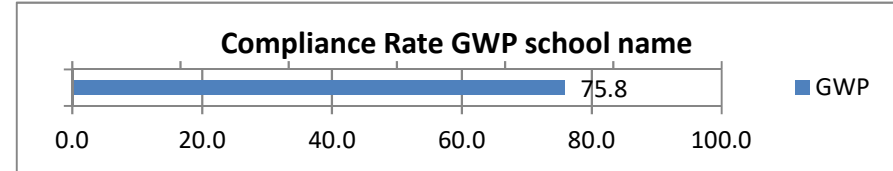
Care and Support Guidance Inspection Ratings



4.5 Operation Encompass

For the period summer term– April - July

Term	Occurrences	CYP
Summer Term 2021	296	371
Spring Term 2021	141	185



* No risk breakdown available for Summer Term 2021

4.6 Elected Home Education (EHE)

	July 2021	July 2020
Total number of children electively home educated	102	55

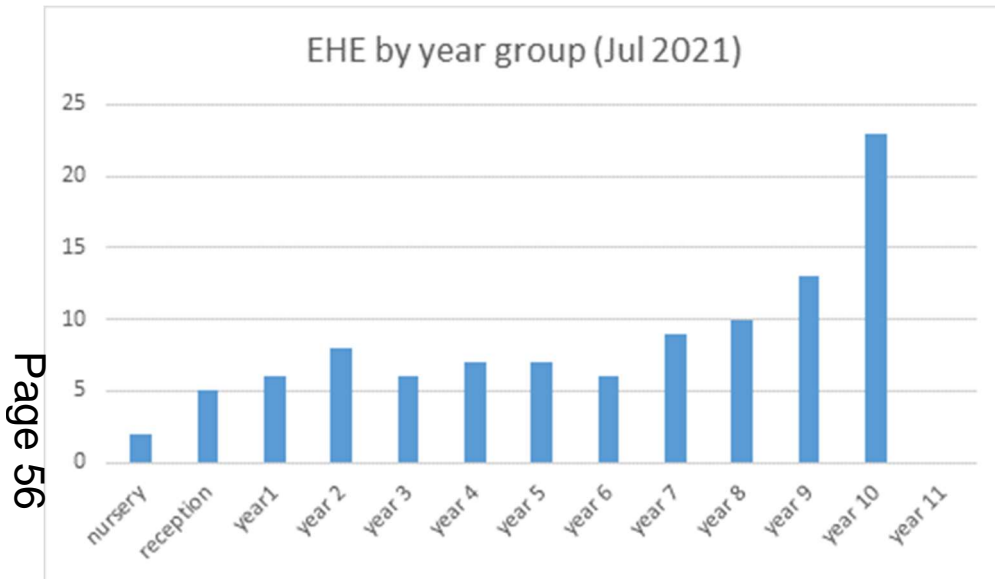
4.7 The table below sets out the number of secondary age pupils who have become EHE or who have returned to school from being EHE during the summer, autumn, spring and summer terms.

Month	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4	
	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In
Sept – Dec 2020	2	0	3	0	4	2	1	0
Jan – Mar 2021	1						2	
Apl – Jul 2021	3		1		3		3	
Total	6	0	4	0	7	2	6	0

4.8 The table below sets out the number of additional pupils who have become EHE or who have returned to school from being EHE during the summer, autumn, spring and summer terms.

Month	Primary		College		Did not transition		Moved into/out of Borough (including BG pupils that were in OOC schools)		School place unavailable	
	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In
Sept – Dec 2020	18	2	0	2	8	0	4	5	2	0
Jan – Mar 2021	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	1		
Apl – Jul 2021	7	1			1		6			
Total	27	4	0	2	10	0	11	6	2	0

4.9 Breakdown per year group EHE



- Please note that all year 11 pupils are removed on the last Friday of June when they end compulsory school education.

5.1 DBS Compliance

Managers are required to identify the requirement of a DBS check utilising the eligibility criteria, all DBS checks are renewed on a 3 yearly basis. Organisational Development co-ordinates this DBS process for new starters and 3 yearly rolling programme along with monitoring the compliance of these checks and we have formal escalation processes in place. The updates on the compliance with DBS are provided bi-annually to Corporate Leadership Team.

This reporting has been relaxed during the pandemic, however the monitoring and escalation processes have continued.

The latest submission to CLT was October 2021 and is shown below:

5.1.1 Position Statement: New Starter / Rolling Programme DBS Checks Schools

Page 57 Effective Date: 13th October 2021

Criteria	Total
Staff requiring a DBS	1284
Staff with a valid DBS	1281

Out of Compliance	Less than 4 weeks	1 - 3 months	More than 3 months	Total
New Starters currently out of compliance	0	0	0	0
Rolling Programme currently out of compliance	0	2	1	3
Totals	0	2	1	3

5.1.2 Position Statement: New Starter / Rolling Programme DBS Checks Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (Excluding Schools).

Effective Date:

13th October 2021

Criteria	Total
Staff requiring a DBS	1066
Staff with a valid DBS	1063

Out of Compliance	Less than 4 weeks	1 - 3 months	More than 3 months	Total
New Starters currently out of compliance		1	2	3
Rolling Programme currently out of compliance				0
Totals	0	1	2	3

1st DBS Check					
Department / School	Awaiting Appointment	Appt Comments	Awaiting Certificate	Cert Comments	Total
Corporate Services			2	Currently with the DBS	2
Regeneration and Community Services			1	Awaiting sight of Cert from employee	1
Corporate Education					0
Social Services					0
Totals	0		3		3

Escalation Process

Employees and Managers receive automated e-mails from the DBS system reminding that the process has not been completed

Operational Teams receive fortnightly reports of all DBS applications currently in progress to enable Safeguarding escalation where required

5.3 VAWDASV Corporate Training Online

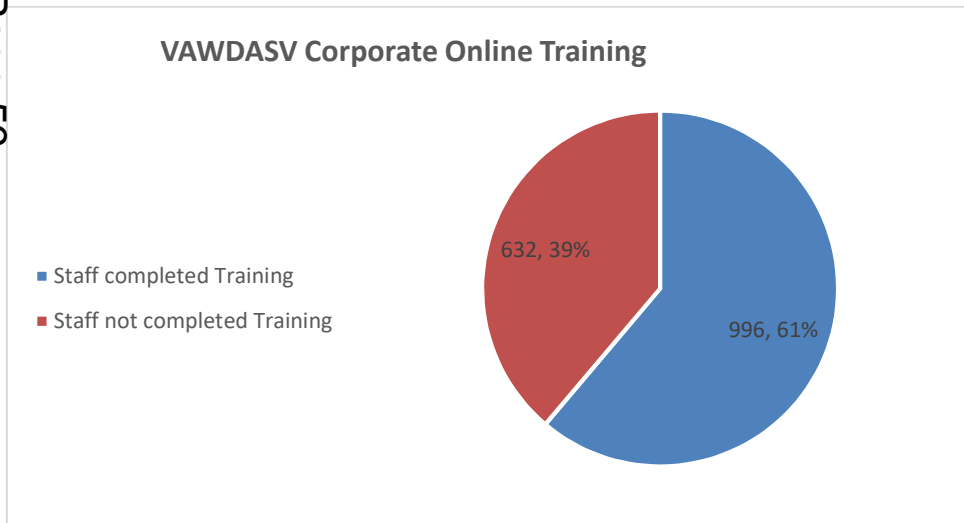
Corporate Training

Domestic abuse Training

Corporate training has been provided to staff in respect of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence with **61%** of staff having **completed** the **VAWDAS online training**.

5.3.1 VAWDASV Corporate

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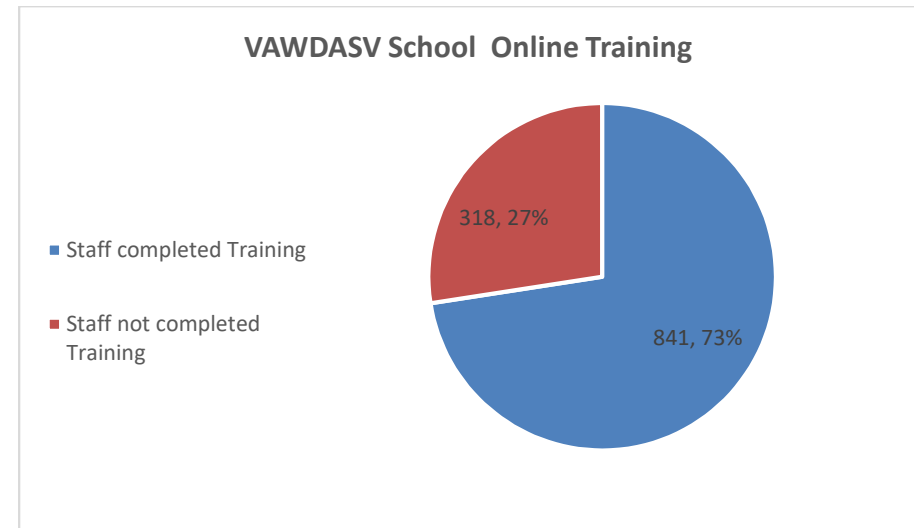


All Wales Safeguarding Training on line for staff

Online Safeguarding training was included in the online corporate induction module in 2019.

In terms of the wider workforce a suitable module is currently being evaluated by the corporate Safeguarding group which has been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic.

5.3.2 VAWDASV Schools



5.4 Risk Register

Ref No.	Description of Risk	Triggers	Consequences	Likelihood	Impact	Status	Current Controls	Likelihood	Impact	Status	Proposed further controls to mitigate / reduce risk	Risk Owner
CRR4	Safeguarding - Failure to ensure adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people in Blaenau Gwent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is inadequate assessments and monitoring • If there is a lack of documentation • If there are increasing referrals for services • If there is a lack of appropriate guidance and training • If there is poor communication between all parties (internal / external) • If there is a high turnover of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential significant harm / loss of life • Long term reputational damage and confidence in the Council undermined • Increase in complaints / Potential litigation / prosecution • External intervention • Increased pressure on budgets • Low staff morale 	3	4	Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gwent Adult Safeguarding Board • SE Wales Safeguarding Children's Board • Standing item on CLT agenda • Safeguarding Network • Director of Social Services has a corporate responsibility for safeguarding • Lead Executive Member identified for safeguarding • Adult protection co-ordinator and process in place in line with All Wales process. • Manager's report consistently on safeguarding to elected Members and the Corporate Leadership Team • Joint Education and Social Services Safeguarding Team • Joint Social Services and Education Safeguarding scrutiny meeting held 3 times a year • Joint Business unit and subgroups for adults and children 	2	4	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Plans will further embed risk assessment tools • Embedding of quality assurance processes in adult safeguarding • Training for all staff on Domestic Abuse Corporately 	<p>Director of Social Services</p> <p>Councillor John Mason</p>

Quarter 1 and 2 Progress (April to September 2021)

Throughout this period COVID 19 has impacted significantly on the Social Services department however despite this, the department has been able to continue to provide a consistent approach and timely response when discharging our statutory safeguarding responsibilities across both Children and Adult Services. Both teams have continued to prioritise safeguarding both within our proactive and reactive responses to support vulnerable families and communities. Both areas experienced an initial reduction in safeguarding referrals during the first few weeks of April 20 but following this period there has been a continued increase in referrals with referral levels/ data indicating that we have quickly returned to 'normal' levels when compared to similar time periods in previous years. Both Adults and Children's services have monitored and reported safeguarding performance measures to Welsh Government during quarter 1. This information has also been reported to the Gwent Safeguarding Board during this period. Both the head of Adults and Children's have been core members of the Gwent Safeguarding Board during this period meeting with key partners including Police, Health, Education, Probation and specialist services on a fortnightly basis. These actions have continued for quarter 2.

Adult Services during quarter 1:

- Safeguarding and Commissioning Teams have led on the safeguarding support relating to COVID including supporting internal and commissioned providers in relation to PHW guidance, PPE compliance, testing and infection control;
- Work has continued in relation to the implementation of the new All Wales Safeguarding procedures including the implementation of the training including alternative IT solutions and the implementation of the new duty to report tools on WCCIS;
- Care Management Teams have continued to support vulnerable people throughout proactive case contact via telephone or where required face to face contact;
- Our safeguarding support providers – including domestic abuse support within IAA have remodelled their provision to enable them to support both via telephone and / or face to face support.

Adult Services during quarter 2:

- Actions are per Quarter 1 have continued for Quarter 2;
- All Wales Safeguarding training has been developed on line for all BG staff to include the implementation of the new Gwent wide duty to report form and guidance;
- Commenced development of Gwent multi agency safeguarding hub across both Adult and Children Services – due for implementation January 2021.

Children Services during quarter 1:	Children Services during quarter 2:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All safeguarding referrals have been dealt with and children and families have been seen face to face when required throughout the COVID lockdown. All visits have been undertaken following a risk assessment and using the appropriate PPE;• All child protection conferences have continued to be held on a virtual basis using a combination of TEAMS can conference calls;• All children on the child protection register have continued to be seen since lockdown began following risk assessments and use of PPE where required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The same situation applies to Quarter 2 for Children's Services as outlined in Quarter 1;• The CIW inspection in the further controls column relates to the inspection of 2018 and all the recommendations have been completed;• An audit of Section 47 investigations was agreed for Quarter 2 but will be undertaken in Quarter 3.

Regulatory Proposals

88	WAO	Follow-up review of Corporate Arrangements for the Safeguarding of Children Document Reference: 1521A2019-20	01/10/2019	<p>1. Corporate Safeguarding Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the Policy • Update the structure • Include updated information from the All Wales Policy • When adopted in April 2020, include information from the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures <p>Completion Date April 2020</p>	Alison Ramshaw (Corporate Safeguarding Group) T1 Families First, IAA 14+ and Safeguarding	Social Services	<p>The Corporate Safeguarding Leads mtg were on hold during the first stage of the pandemic but reconvened during the latter part of the year. The chair of the CSL group wrote a report to CLT and the Audit Committee seeking approval to extend the completion dates of the WAO Safeguarding Review recommendations as the pandemic meant that no progress could be made. Extended dates were agreed and a further 12 months was approved. Work was completed on the updating of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and a Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework has been developed. Both pieces of work are currently awaiting CLT approval prior to implementation. The Wales Safeguarding App is available to all those staff who have a works mobile and communications have gone out to alert those staff without a works mobile of the App which is available to all via Google search engine. Lead officers with responsibility for safeguarding are still to be identified</p>
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ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol
Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

Anti-Bullying Strategy

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Introduction

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and its partner agencies take bullying among children and young people very seriously. Almost half (46%) of children and young people say they have been bullied at school at some point in their lives. 38% of disabled children worried about being bullied. 18% of children and young people who worried about bullying said they would not talk to their parents about it (*National report - Department for Children, Schools and Families*).

Locally, our children and young people have also spoken of their concern of bullying and the need for further action (Appendix A). This multi-agency strategy details the commitments made in responding to this, and lays down the key objectives to be achieved. We must not underestimate the impact bullying has on the emotional, academic, social and personal wellbeing of children and young people. Bullying causes great distress which can continue right through adulthood and, at worst, bullying can lead to suicide.

This strategy recognises the complex nature of bullying behaviour and the importance of early identification and intervention. Traditional 'bully/victim' stereotypes need to be challenged, and a more in-depth understanding and awareness needs to be fostered. We need to establish a 'culture of telling' across settings, where children and young people, parents and professionals alike feel confident in dealing with bullying, and have confidence that appropriate action will be taken if instances are reported. Although we cannot entirely control the environment children and young people grow up in, we can discourage them from engaging in bullying behaviour.

To establish a consistent approach to tackling bullying between children and young people across the borough, a project group has developed this strategy. There are often deep-rooted triggers to bullying behaviour, and a multi-faceted approach is required in response. Prevention of, and reaction to, bullying should be addressed in equal measure and guidance and training need to be provided. Specific support will be required to protect the most vulnerable children and young people (e.g. those in care of Social Services, those who are young carers, those who have additional needs and/or disabilities, and those who suffer racial and homophobic bullying in particular), and communication between agencies will be essential if we are to identify and reduce persistent patterns of bullying behaviour.

Efforts to reduce bullying map directly onto four of the seven Core Aims of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) Rights to Action (2004). Every child and young person should: enjoy education, training and learning opportunities that are free from the personal threat of bullying (Core Aim 2); experience the best possible mental, social and emotional health, which is free from abuse,

victimisation and exploitation (Core Aim 3); be listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised (Core Aim 5) and; have a safe home and community which supports emotional wellbeing (Core Aim 6).

By bringing together work from various teams in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council with that of partner agencies, this strategy provides a coordinated approach to tackling bullying. A borough-wide definition of bullying is provided, along with six core strands of work. A number of strategic objectives are outlined and a shared approach to tackling bullying is summarised. Guidance produced by the Welsh Government on how to develop an anti-bullying policy can be found in Appendix C, along with a sample anti-bullying participation charter and newly developed recording protocol. Information on where to find resources and contacts can be found in Appendix D.

Genuine commitment to the strategy is required from all headteachers, school staff, governors and centre leaders. Anti-bullying needs to take a high priority, and each institution is responsible for developing a model of good practice. The Council will work with all relevant settings to monitor, support and challenge where appropriate. Ultimately, we all have a role to play in ensuring communities flourish where children and young people are free from bullying.

What Children, Young People, Parents and Professionals Think

'It isn't big to make others feel small'

Primary school pupil.

'Bullying is cruel not cool'

Secondary school pupil.

'We found that listening to what our daughter wanted and needed was the right thing to do'

Parent.

'Bullying is not an easy issue to approach, especially if you suspect the child you're looking after is doing the bullying'

Foster Carer.

'Schools should create a whole school ethos where bullying is unacceptable in a safe, inclusive climate.'

Teacher.

Aim

The aim of this strategy is to establish a coordinated, consistent approach to tackling bullying in all Blaenau Gwent schools, youth and community settings. The Council and all partner agencies need to work together from a shared understanding to develop evidence-based methods for significantly reducing instances of bullying between children and young people.

The following key stakeholders have signed up and committed to the above aim of this anti-bullying strategy:

Education Welfare Service
Service Improvement and Performance Team
Communities First
Healthy Schools Officer
Inclusion Team
Children and Young People's Participation Officer
Youth Service
Corporate Equalities Officer
GAVO
Schools Liaison Police Officers

Definition

Although bullying is a subjective experience, and thus hard to define, it is important that we develop a shared understanding of what bullying is and how it differs from other forms of misbehaviour. All agencies are invited to adopt the Blaenau Gwent definition of bullying, developed by children, young people and adults in the borough:

"Bullying is behaviour by an individual or a group, usually repeated, that intentionally hurts another individual either emotionally or physically".

Bullying can happen anywhere: at school, travelling to and from school, in [sporting](#) teams, between neighbours or in the [workplace](#).

Bullying generally takes one of four forms:

Verbal	Physical
Emotional	Indirect

Although not an exhaustive list, common examples of bullying include:

Racial bullying	Homophobic bullying
Cyber bullying	Sexual bullying
Teasing	Name calling
Making threats	Physical assault

Bullying can also be based on disability, ability, gender, appearance or circumstance.

It is important that when dealing with alleged incidents of bullying, individual perspectives are taken into account. If a child, young person or adult states that bullying is happening, action must be taken to determine why this allegation has been made. There will be occasions when children and young people physically or emotionally hurt others without meaning to do so, and it is important that appropriate support is provided to both parties, but the behaviour need not be labelled as bullying. It is also important to be mindful that extreme instances of bullying that include harassment could be treated as a criminal offence. All bullying is based on difference to some degree (perceived or actual), and the WG document 'Respecting Others' provides information for tackling all forms of bullying.

Cyber bullying - much work needs to be undertaken with children and young people to further our understanding of this issue and develop methods for tackling it. Sending threatening text messages or emails is a criminal offence and police have the power to search computers and mobile phones for evidence. The latest guidance on tackling cyber bullying can be found at www.bullying.co.uk, and (*insert organisation*) offer workshops and training programmes on a variety of internet and mobile technology topics, including cyber bullying (see Appendix E).

Homophobic bullying is based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, and when tackling this issue we should also be mindful of transgender bullying, that is, bullying based on socially non-normative gender identity. Recent research has shown that of 300 secondary schools in England and Wales surveyed, 82% of teachers were aware of verbal incidents, yet only 6% of schools referred to this type of bullying in their anti-bullying policy. We need to improve upon staff and parental knowledge and attitude in this area: EACH (Educational Action Challenging Homophobia), Stonewall Cymru and <http://www.lgbtcymruhelpline.org.uk/> The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender help line provide support to young people (help line) and training for professionals, (see Appendix D)

Racial bullying can be motivated by race, skin colour, nationality, accent, cultural identity and/or religion, and we need to work closely with partner agencies to challenge such stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice. Gwent Ethnic Minority Support Service and Valrec can provide advice and guidance on the Equality Act 2010, and how to deal with racist incidents and develop understanding of diversity (see Appendix D).

Bullying of children and young people with disabilities or additional needs requires careful consideration, because some of these young people may have social or communicative difficulties reporting it. We need to support all vulnerable groups, and Social Services have a particular role to play here.

Organisations such as Mencap, the National Youth Advocacy Service and Special Needs Advocacy Project may be able to offer additional advice (see Appendix D), and we need to also tackle bullying of the more able and talented.

Strategic Objectives

There are a number of strategic objectives that need to be met if we are to build upon the anti-bullying work conducted in Blaenau Gwent. The project group will report to the Education Directorate Senior Leadership Team and the Council on progress made in achieving these objectives, in particular:

- All partner agencies have effective anti-bullying policies and recording procedures in place.
- Training is provided to all partners.
- Collation and analysis of bullying incident information from partner agencies.
- Sharing of information between partners.
- Revise strategy according to needs analysis.

In conjunction with working towards these strategic objectives, it is vital that all agencies regularly reflect on their own anti-bullying work and consider how improvements could be made.

Core Strands

Six core strands of work underpin Blaenau Gwent's Anti-Bullying Strategy:

- Policy and practice
- Awareness and communication
- Evidence-based initiatives
- Involving children and young people
- Positive partnerships
- Monitoring

Each of these will be summarised in turn, and key activities will be highlighted throughout. Ultimately, the Project Group will evaluate progress in achieving these key activities and the strategic objectives outlined.

Strand 1: Policy and Practice

To tackle bullying effectively, it is essential that we get policy and practice right. The Welsh Government Circular 23/2003, *Respecting Others: Anti-Bullying Guidance* provides school governors, headteachers, teachers and other staff with information on tackling bullying in schools and the steps that schools should take to support learners who report bullying outside of school.

The Government's *Safeguarding Guidance Aug 2013 (draft)* states that "All settings in which children are provided with services should have in place rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies. Schools need to take an active approach to tackle all forms of bullying, and should be taking action to prevent bullying behaviour as well as responding to incidents when they occur."

Under the *School Standards Framework Act 1998 (Section 61)*, headteachers have a legal obligation to ensure an anti-bullying policy is in place within their school. Each anti-bullying policy needs to be clear about what bullying is and how the school, youth or community setting intends to deal with it. Policies should extend to after school clubs and transport arrangements and protocol should also be in place for dealing with the most serious instances of bullying, such as when a child or young person threatens to commit suicide. All policies should be reviewed annually, and it is important that children, young people, staff and parents are involved in this process to develop a whole-school/community approach.

A 'culture of telling' needs to be encouraged. Children and young people, parents and professionals need to feel confident that, if reported, bullying will be dealt with appropriately. All staff need to work from a shared understanding, and all incidents of bullying need to be dealt with fairly and consistently. A good working relationship between staff and parents can only improve the situation.

There is clear evidence that anti-bullying charters/agreements can be used effectively to promote positive participation, and all agencies are encouraged to use such tools to establish whole-school/community cohesion. A sample charter can be found in Appendix C, along with WAG policy development guidance.

Key Activities

- All school, youth and community settings need to develop, implement, monitor and review whole-school/community anti-bullying policies effectively.
- All agencies are encouraged to nominate an anti-bullying lead to oversee implementation of the Key Recommendations.
- All agencies are encouraged to monitor the effectiveness of their own policy.
- Blaenau Gwent will issue an Anti-bullying toolkit for settings to assist them in formulating policy and practice.

Strand 2: Awareness and Communication

All children, young people, parents and professionals need to have an understanding of what bullying is and why it happens. Events such as Anti-Bullying Week are important for raising awareness, but regular work throughout the year needs to be done to celebrate diversity and respect difference. A cross-curricular approach needs to be adopted in schools, and youth and community settings need to be creative and innovative in approaching this complex issue. Local media and the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council website will be utilised to raise the profile of anti bullying practice across the borough.

Communication between agencies within and across authorities needs to develop further and it is proposed that the Anti-bullying Project Group evolves as a sub-group of Blaenau Gwent's Local Safeguarding Children Board. Current members of the multi-agency anti-bullying group can be found in the Positive Partnerships section.

Key Activities

- Raise the profile of anti bullying practice in school, youth and community settings.
- Work with parents/carers to raise awareness and understanding of issues surrounding bullying.
- Encourage full engagement and coordinate evidence-based activities for Anti-Bullying Week
- Establish a standing group to promote communication between agencies and monitor and evaluate progress of the strategy.

Strand 3: Evidence-based Initiatives

All work designed to prevent and challenge bullying needs to be informed by good practice, and all staff working with children and young people need to understand the underlying causes of bullying and have the ability to promote positive life and social skills. Research has identified a number of pro-active preventative and reactive initiatives that can be used effectively to combat bullying and promote positive peer relations. All children and young people should have access to a choice of methods for reporting incidents of bullying without feeling threatened (e.g., friendly teacher, peer supporter, worry box), and information on different reporting options should be promoted and made readily available.

Wherever possible, an anti-bullying message needs to be reinforced. Cooperative group work and circle time activities can be used from the early years onwards to promote positive peer relations, celebrate diversity and respect difference. School councils can play a crucial role in identifying work that needs to be done, and peer support schemes harbour an anti-bullying ethos, provide direct assistance for those who need it, and promote the development of social skills and confidence in those who participate.

If an individual is in need of more support, a circle of friends or support group can be set up. Direct mediation of the situation can be carried out by trained peers or adults, and restorative practice provides a well-established framework for repairing harm as far as possible. Assertiveness training can also be used to promote resilience, raise self-esteem and empower bystanders. As the evidence-base for school-based counselling develops, this will be kept under

review in order to share good practice and bridge the gap between research and practice.

Key Activities

- Identify resources to develop high quality evidence-based training entitlement for all settings.
- Develop and publicise signposting information to direct schools and other settings on how to access support.

Strand 4: Involving Children and Young People

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that all children and young people are given the opportunity and encouragement to speak out and have their voices heard on matters that directly affect them. This right is formerly recognised in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Welsh Government document Extending Entitlement.

This strategy was written in response to requests made by children and young people of Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, it is critical that our children and young people are provided with continuing opportunities to influence key decisions that will shape our anti-bullying work. It is recommended that children and young people are fully consulted in the drafting of this strategy and are engaged in further developments such as work on an anti-bullying website for Blaenau Gwent.

We need to give children and young people the opportunity to make a stand against bullying, and equip them with the skills needed to prevent it, deal with it and help others. Schools and other youth and community settings are encouraged to involve children and young people as far as possible in developing and reviewing anti-bullying policies. Bullying is a complex ever changing issue, and children and young people will have many of the answers. They can tell us what the most important issues are, and provide some insight into how best to solve them.

Key Activities

- Invite representative Blaenau Gwent Grand School Council members to

contribute to the anti-bullying standing group.

- Identify resources to host a children and young person's anti-bullying conference on an annual basis.
- Further develop the role of Young Ambassadors in assessing schools for the Anti Bullying Kite Mark

Strand 5: Positive Partnerships

Without partnership working, we will not be able to deliver a consistent anti-bullying approach in Blaenau Gwent. In particular, the following services will be instrumental in the future development of the strategy:

Schools

Education Directorate Services

Local Health Board: Primary Mental Health Team

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Communities First

Children and Family Services: Strategic Partnership Officer

Youth Offending Service

Gwent Police: Community Safety Partnership

Local Service Board

Gwent Ethnic Minority Support Service

Corporate Equalities Officer

More work is required to ensure parents and families understand the complex nature of bullying and how best to prevent it, deal with it and support those affected by it. All anti-bullying policies should be made available to parents/carers, because trusting communicative relationships are essential if families are to work together with school, youth and community settings. Governors also have an important role to play in informing school policy and ensuring effective implementation (see Appendix E for a useful guide).

It is critical that a 'joined-up' approach continues to develop, and formalising an anti-bullying standing sub-group within Blaenau Gwent's Local Safeguarding Children Board will support this. The current audit of anti-bullying services also needs to be updated and publicised across the borough.

Key Activities:

- Develop a multi-agency standing group to oversee all anti-bullying work and evaluate progress.
- Communicate key developments and encourage collaborative working between partners via the standing group.
- Evaluate and respond to the training needs of professionals and provide support/guidance to parents and carers.

Strand 6: Monitoring

Although recent audits have identified bullying as a key issue faced by children and young people in Blaenau Gwent (Appendix A), we have few baseline measures or statistics to guide our work. Gathering accurate information on the prevalence of different types of bullying is therefore a key priority within this strategy.

All children's services have a duty of care, under the Children Act 2004 (Section 11), to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It is therefore critical that school, youth and community settings record all instances of bullying, along with actions undertaken and outcomes. Every setting is responsible for recording, reporting and acting upon incidents of bullying that occur in their care and bullying in the community needs to be reported to Gwent Police and/or the Community Safety Partnership. Agencies that are aware of bullying occurring in settings other than their own should ensure those in charge are aware of the situation. A suggested recording protocol for schools and youth settings can be found in Appendix D, and further details of reporting arrangements can be found in the Key Recommendations. Every alleged incident needs to be recorded, and if confirmed, logged accordingly. Schools will report confirmed incidents of bullying via SIMS. Other youth settings may use the annual summation forms to collate the confirmed information and report it to their appropriate line manager. All agencies are encouraged to monitor their own progress in combating bullying and share this with the Local Service Board so that relevant resources can be targeted where needed most.

The benefit of collating borough-wide information year on year will be evidenced in the ability to:

- analyse information to provide audits and target resources appropriately;

- monitor the effectiveness of individual policies;
- evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the Anti-Bullying Strategy.

Schools should be reporting to governors termly, and the Project Group will report to the Blaenau Gwent Association of Schools Governors and Council annually. It should be noted that reported rates of bullying may increase initially as a result of awareness raised by this strategy.

Key Activities

- Provide key stakeholders with clear, simple and consistent protocol for recording and reporting instances of bullying, reinforced by the inclusion of reporting arrangements in the kite mark award.
- Assess levels and types of bullying in school, youth and community settings and compare with current statistics.
- Use this data along with information gleaned from training evaluation and consultation with children and young people as performance indicators.
- Work with all partners to develop protocol for sharing information regarding bullying.

Key Recommendations: A Shared Approach

Because bullying often persists across a variety of settings, a number of broad recommendations are required to establish a 'shared approach'. All partner agencies (see Appendix B) are encouraged to:

1. nominate an anti-bullying lead to help settings implement the above recommendations and, if possible, act as a first point of contact for other professionals in partner agencies;
2. develop, implement, monitor, revise and publicise an anti-bullying policy in line with the WG guidance provided in Appendix D;
3. work on prevention and intervention activities throughout the year and organise events for Anti-Bullying Week (usually end of November);
4. adopt the components of the Blaenau Gwent definition of bullying and recording protocol as a basis for good practice (see Appendix D). these components are defined within the BG Anti-bullying toolkit;
5. share incident information with the appropriate department (e.g. schools would report to Inclusion team) so that the anti-bullying work conducted across Blaenau Gwent can be evaluated, co-ordinated and improved. All settings are also encouraged to use incident information to evaluate their own policy and target resources where needed most. A precise information sharing protocol will need to be developed for this in the future.
6. share confirmed bullying incident information when appropriate with the Community Safety Partnership, who will determine (with consent from the young person who has experienced the bullying) what course of action, if any, is required;
7. make use of training provided to ensure that all settings are able to implement the above recommendations and develop effective evidence-based anti-bullying strategies;
8. undertake internal audits of staff, children, young person and parent/carer perceptions of bullying. Both the 'life in schools' questionnaire and the Anti-Bullying Alliance audit toolkit can be used for this purpose (see Appendix E for details).

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Bullying Audit
Appendix B	Links
Appendix C	Policy Guidelines, Sample Charter and Recording Sheets
Appendix D	Resources and Contacts

APPENDIX A

Bullying Audit

In 2010, 135 young people attended an Anti-bullying conference event. The event took place during half term in Ebbw Vale leisure centre.

Young people facilitated the event from training they received from Communities First and 'Funky dragon'. 94 questionnaires were completed.

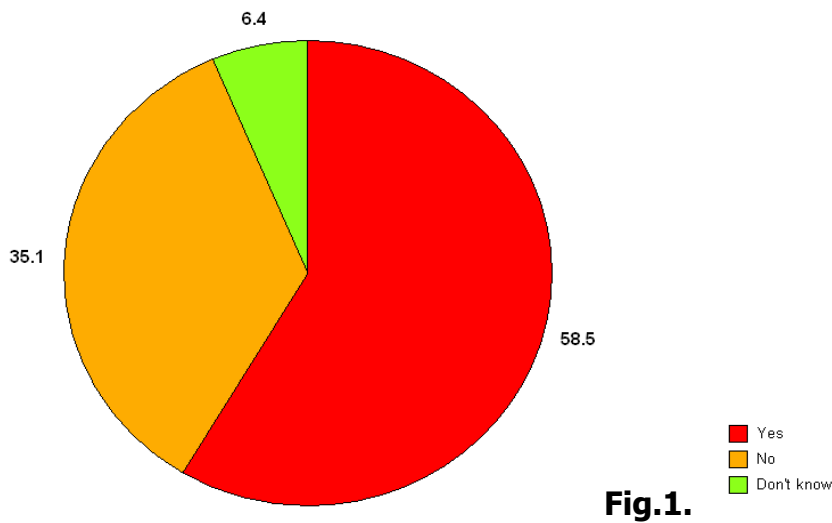


Fig.1.

Fig. 1 demonstrates whether young people thought they had been bullied.

Fig 2.

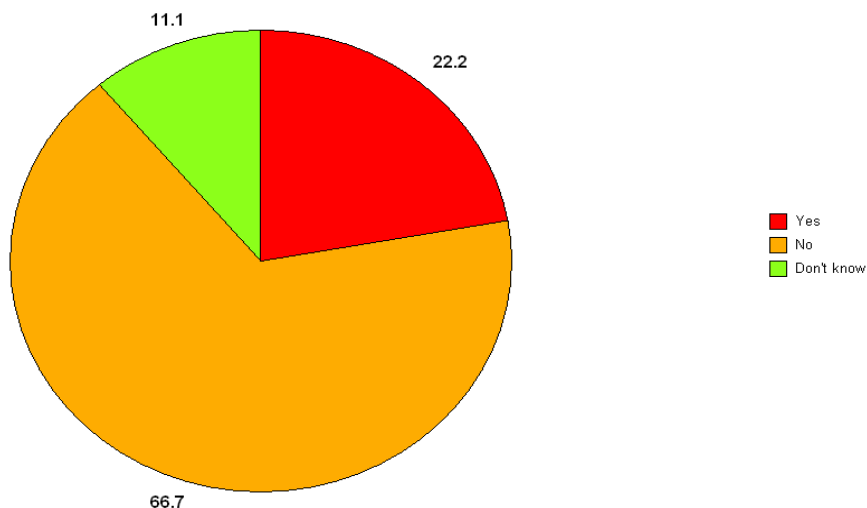


Fig 2. shows the responses to the question 'have you ever been a bully?'

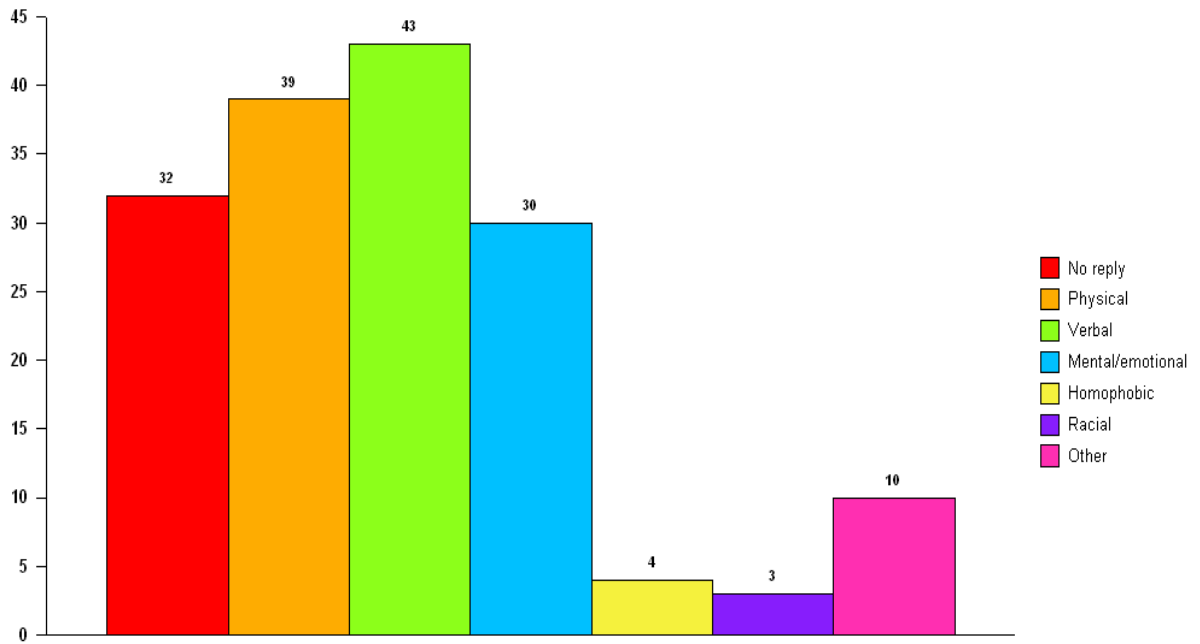


Fig.3. demonstrates the types of bullying young people have experienced

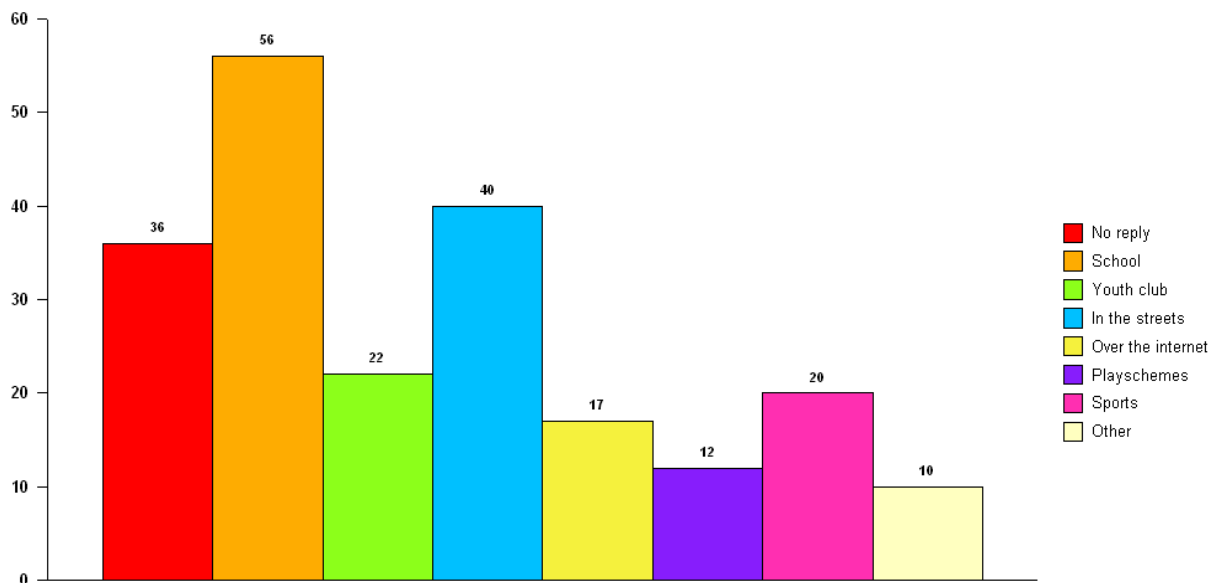


Fig 4 shows where young people have been bullied.

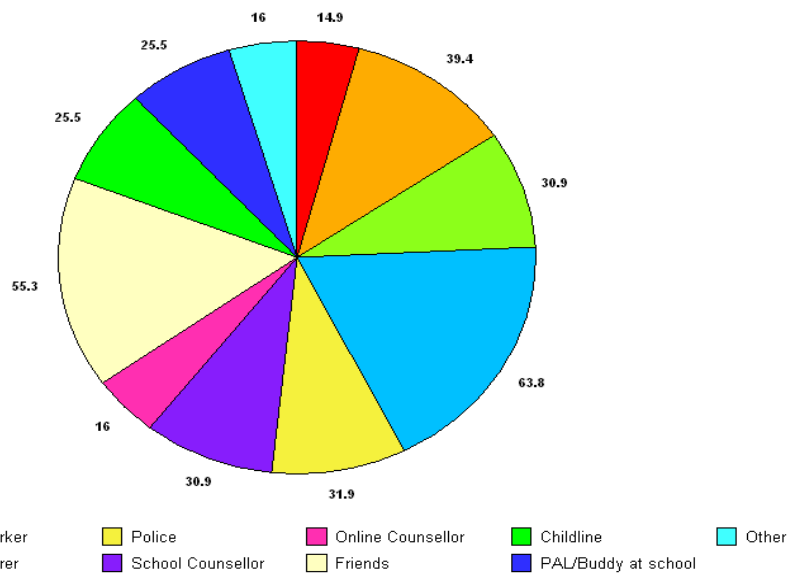


Fig 5 shows who young people would turn to if they, or they knew someone else was being bullied

APPENDIX B

Links

This Anti Bullying Strategy links appropriately with other current LA plans including:

Self Evaluation Report
Corporate Improvement Plan
Single Integrated Plan

Links with other local documents include:

Local Safeguarding Children Strategy
Community Safety Strategy
Strategic Equalities Plan
Special Educational Needs Policy and Practice
Inclusion Strategy
Engagement Strategy
Local Service Board Strategy
School Beat Policy

Links with national and international documents include:

UN Convention of the Rights of the Child 1992 www.cirp.org/library/ethics/UN-convention

Education Act 1996 www.opsi.go.uk/acts/acts1996

School Standards and Framework Act 1998 www.opsi.go.uk/acts/acts1998

Human Rights Act 1998 www.opsi.go.uk/acts/acts1998

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 www.opsi.go.uk/acts/acts2000

Welsh Assembly Government: Extending Entitlement 2000
www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills

Welsh Assembly Government: Respecting Others 2011
www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills

Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004
www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/guidance

Welsh Assembly Government: Rights to Action 2004
www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications

Estyn: Tackling Bullying in Schools 2006 www.estyn.gov.uk/publications

Education and Inspections Act 2006 www.opsi.go.uk/acts/acts2006

Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

APPENDIX C

Policy Guidelines, Sample Charter and Recording Sheets

The following policy guidelines have been adapted from the self-assessment toolkit currently being piloted in schools by Welsh Assembly Government. Small changes have been made to the text to ensure it is applicable to other youth and community settings, and it should be used with reference to the Welsh Assembly Government Circular 050/2011 Respecting Others: Anti-bullying Guidance.

Consultation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has the school consulted widely in developing its policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have a variety of methods of consultation been used?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are interested groups being consulted at all stages of developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Definition of bullying	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy define what the school considers 'bullying' to be?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this definition of bullying clear and age-appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to identify behaviour as bullying	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy identify types of bullying behaviour, including the use of modern technologies as a tool for bullying?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy identify important categories of bullying, for example bullying on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, Special Educational Needs or disabilities and long-term health conditions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategies for the school	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy deal with bullying as a whole-school issue?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy identify a range of strategies the school can use to reduce bullying?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy consider all the opportunities where bullying can be tackled through the curriculum?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy lay out an effective system for keeping records of bullying incidents?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategies for parents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have parents/carers been consulted on the development of the school's anti-bullying strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy set out clear guidelines for parents wishing to complain about bullying?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Strategies for pupils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy lay out clear, age-appropriate guidelines for pupils wishing to complain about bullying?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy ensure that all children and young people are aware of the support available to those who have been bullied?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy ensure that all children and young people are aware of the disciplinary processes for those involved in bullying incidents?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are these clear procedures for reporting and dealing with incidents of bullying for pupil, parents, teachers and other staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there clear guidelines on how new pupils/staff are inducted into the school's anti-bullying policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there clear processes for keeping the policy under continuous monitoring?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timetable for development and review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy include a checklist of by when things should have happened?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the policy lay out dates for regular reviews of the policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Anti-Bullying Charter

In our community, we will:

-  Work together to prevent bullying;
-  Celebrate diversity;
-  Respect difference;
-  Be friendly to one another;
-  Always report bullying;
-  Deal with bullying seriously;
-  Accept others, regardless of appearance, race, ability, culture, sexuality, gender or circumstance.

Signature: _____

Blaenau Gwent Alleged Bullying Incident Log

	Name(s), Age, Gender	Setting
Child(s) alleged to be experiencing bullying behaviour		
Child(s) alleged to be engaging in bullying behaviour		
Reported by:		Date:
Investigation by:		Date:
Account of individual(s) alleged to be experiencing bullying behaviour: (use separate sheet if required)		
Looked After Child? Yes / No	Ethnicity:	
Account of individual(s) alleged to be engaging in bullying behaviour: (use separate sheet if required)		
Looked After Child? Yes / No	Ethnicity:	
Action: (use separate sheet if required)		
Review/monitoring date:		
Was alleged bullying confirmed?	Yes	No
		Insufficient evidence to decide
Was the matter resolved?	Yes / No	
Details:		
Future action : (if appropriate)		

* Blaenau Gwent Confirmed Bullying Incidents should be logged and then reported to the LA via SIMS (for schools only)

“Bullying behaviour involves an imbalance of power where a person or group of people repeatedly and intentionally cause emotional or physical harm to another person or group of people. Isolated instances of hurtful behaviour, teasing or arguments between individuals of equal power should not be seen as bullying.”

Annual Bullying Incident Summary

Name of organisation/team:

(Note schools' data will be gathered via SIMS reports)

Name of person collating information:

	September/ December		January/ April		May/ August		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total number of bullying incidents								
Physical								
Verbal								
Indirect								
Cyber								
Racial								
Homophobic								
Sexual								
Based on gender								
Based on appearance								
Based on disability								
Based on ability								
Looked After Child								
Other								

Total number engaging in bullying behaviour	Male				
	Female				

Total number experiencing bullying behaviour					

APPENDIX D

Resources and Contacts

The Blaenau Gwent Anti Bullying Toolkit includes a number of links to resources and websites that can be used to help tackle bullying.

<http://www.eachaction.org.uk/support/homophobic-bullying/>

Show Racism the red card

<http://www.srtrc.org/>

NASUWT: Guidance on prejudice related bullying, including homophobic bullying, racist bullying, faith-based bullying, disability bullying, sexist bullying and transphobic bullying

<http://www.nasuwat.org.uk/MemberSupport/NASUWTPublications/PrejudiceRelatedBullying/>

Stonewall cymru : the all Wales lesbian, gay and bi sexual equality charity.

http://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/cymru/english/about_us/

BBC Newsround: Lesson plans and resources around tackling racism

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/news/>

Rewind: materials and discussions about race

http://www.rewind.org.uk/resources_for_schools

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Joint Education and Learning and Social Services Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **21st January 2022**

Report Subject: **Adult Safeguarding Report 1st April to 30th September 2021**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
23.11.2021	25.11.2021	12.01.22			10.12.2021	02.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny Members with Safeguarding Performance information relating to Adult Services from 1st April to the 30th September 2021. The information provided will enable Members to identify Safeguarding areas within the Authority which require further development to improve Safeguarding practice and procedures for Adult Services.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 In April 2016 The Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB) became a statutory Board as set out in Part 7 of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The Board's purpose is twofold; to protect adults in Gwent becoming "adults at risk" and to protect adults who have been abused or neglected or are at risk of abuse or neglect.
- 2.2 A governance framework has been established by the Boards with each group structure having clear terms of reference and work plans which link directly to the three year strategic plan 2020/2023. This enables the Board to provide assurances for partner agencies and members of the public, to maintain oversight of the operational demand across agencies and to consider priorities moving forward.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 The report has been considered and agreed by the Social Services Leadership team and the Corporate Leadership Team.

3.2 Option 1

Scrutiny are asked to accept the report as provided.

Option 2

To seek further clarification on any areas within the report and/or to highlight any areas of interest or concern that need to be considered further.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions.

4.2 The Safeguarding agenda is considered as part of the Council's Corporate Strategies that includes:

- Corporate Plan;
- Single Integrated Plan;
- Corporate Risk Register.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There is no anticipated impact on the budget both in the short and long term.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The Directorate Risk register identifies the highest risks for the Social Services Department. These are monitored as part of the quarterly report of the Director of Social Services.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications within this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no implications within this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Performance and data is provided within the report

The number of reports received of an 'adult suspected of being at risk' during the given period was 295 which is a slight increase on the previous year where the total number of referrals for the same period in 2020/2021 was 261.

Number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during 1st April to 30 th June 2021	147
Number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during 1 st July to 30 th September 2021	148

The number of referrals received within the different categories of abuse or neglect are shown below. As in previous years the most referrals are received for females over the age of 65. This is a national trend. The category of abuse most reported is one of neglect and the least reported is sexual which has been the situation for last four years.

Although as a percentage the number of referrals for sexual abuse has risen in the last half year.

Category of Abuse	Gender	Age 18-64	Age – 65 and over	Age 18-64	Age – 65 and over
		01/04/21 – 30/06/21	01/04/21 – 30/06/21	01/07/21 – 30/09/21	01/07/21 – 30/09/21
Physical	Male	5	4	4	6
	Female	9	10	11	17
Sexual	Male	2	0	2	0
	Female	5	1	7	3
Emotional /Psychological	Male	6	1	6	4
	Female	16	8	10	4
Financial	Male	8	3	6	4
	Female	6	10	4	11
Neglect	Male	8	13	4	12
	Female	7	25	6	27
Total	Male	29	21	22	26
	Female	43	54	38	62
	Total	72	75	60	88

Referrals of domestic abuse are captured as part of the data return for the Welsh Government. There has been an increase in reports received for domestic abuse with 33 in the last half year and 61 in the current half year.

		Age 18-64	Age – 65 and over	Age 18-64	Age – 65 and over
		01/04/21 – 30/06/21	01/04/21 – 30/06/21	01/07/21 – 30/09/21	01/07/21 – 30/09/21
Domestic	Male	5	4	3	5
	Female	11	13	8	12

Each of the five local authorities have different structures in place to respond to concerns about domestic violence, however GWASB partner agencies are represented on local and regional domestic abuse forums. There are strong links between practitioners in safeguarding and domestic abuse fields of practice and domestic abuse training is available and is well attended by all agencies across Gwent in a variety of

formats. As discussed in previous years Blaenau Gwent have secured a seconded post, funded through Integrated Care Funding, from Cyfannol and the support worker is based within safeguarding and Information Advice and Assistance until March 2022.

The place where the alleged abuse occurred can be seen in the table below. The majority of referrals were split between the alleged abuse taking place in the persons own home The alleged perpetrators in these cases could be paid carers going into the home or friends and family or within a care setting including a health environment - this could be residential, nursing or respite care and again the alleged perpetrators could be paid carers, family and/or other service users.

Place alleged abuse or neglect occurred	Total 01/04/21 – 30/06/21	Total 01/07/21 – 30/09/21
Own Home	79	57
Community	17	15
Care Home Setting	46	67
Health Setting	5	9
Total	147	148

Safeguarding is an important part of the commissioning function and requires a substantial resource commitment from the Commissioning Team who provide crucial information in respect of commissioned services and providers which contributes to informed decision making in relation to safeguarding cases. A member of the Commissioning Team attends every strategy meeting held for commissioned services to offer advice, guidance and perspective. Whether referrals progress to strategy discussions/meetings and further enquiries are needed with providers the commissioning team are involved as part of the enquiry.

The persons alleged responsible for the abuse are broken down in the table below. Paid employees being alleged perpetrators for 60 of the reports received and 61 being a relative. The previous year showed similar figures. To progress the referral consent is needed from the alleged victim, but that consent can be overridden when a paid employee is the alleged perpetrator. In the domestic abuse cases a high proportion of alleged victims do not consent to the referral progressing through safeguarding. These referrals are submitted to the Police for further action.

Person alleged responsible	Total 01/04/21 – 30/06/21	Total 01/07/21 – 30/09/21
A spouse	10	8
A child	12	12
A family member who is not a child or spouse	13	6
A professional	33	27
A volunteer or unpaid worker	0	0
A friend	7	7
A neighbour	0	0
Another service user	6	18
Other person	8	8
Not known – no specific individual identified on the duty to report due to the nature of the service settings i.e. unwitnessed fall by a service user	58	62
Total	147	148

The referrals received are from a variety of sources, as listed in the table below. The majority of the referrals were submitted from provider agencies.

Source of Referral	Total 01/04/21 – 30/06/21	Total 01/07/21 – 30/09/21
Self-reported	5	8
Relative	9	7
Friend or neighbour	1	3
Early Intervention / Prevention Service	0	0
Health	32	15
Education	1	2
Housing	1	0
Police	7	3
Probation	0	2
Third sector	10	7
Local authority	4	3
Independent hospital	0	0
Ambulance service	7	3
Care regulator	5	3
Provider agency	37	69
Advocate	0	0
Other	8	8
Internal (Social Worker, other team)	20	15
Total	147	148

Updated response to the Pandemic over the last 6 months

- ✓ The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused significant disruption to all services and communities across the region. Despite this, Gwent Safeguarding Board and Blaenau Gwent Safeguarding team have worked diligently to ensure that essential services have remained operational to provide support to the most vulnerable adults.
- ✓ Since the onset of the pandemic, we have made considerable efforts working with our regional partners to develop a comprehensive agency training programme so that we can offer online learning experience and move towards a more blended approach to practitioner development. This enables us to continue to raise awareness of safeguarding and add value to agencies/providers on training provision and our training resources are up to date and meet the required standards. During the summer period information sessions were held with the social work teams to increase knowledge of the Wales safeguarding Procedures and promote collaboration and early intervention. We have delivered this via Teams to minimise the impact of Covid19. Our long term plan is to continue to deliver the training to social work teams and then expand this to external providers in the authority. We have also been collaborating with the Caerphilly Safeguarding Team to deliver Advanced Safeguarding Training via Teams organised through Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly's Joint Workforce training unit.
- ✓ In terms of collaboration and early prevention we have been strengthening our relationship with our IAA team. This has involved a member of the safeguarding team basing themselves within the service once a week. This has allowed for early discussions and a collaborate response to ensure preventative services can be utilised where appropriate
- ✓ Multi-agency Transition panel still meet regularly as this improves collaboration with other agencies in both adult and children's services and across social care, health and education. This forum promotes early intervention and prevention for young people transitioning to adulthood. It also helps us identify trends in terms of the issues young adults are experiencing.
- ✓ We are continuing to work well with voluntary organisations, however it is evident that they too are experiencing higher pressures as a result of staffing resources, therefore we have taken the opportunity to provide additional grant funding to alleviate any pressures in preventing a backlog in referrals.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

Quarterly reporting provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Directorate and ensure accountability.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping shape and influence future design of services

6.4 *Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)*

The Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board has developed a new partnership agreement between local authorities and agency partners including Gwent Police, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Wales Probation Trust, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations which sets out a clear and shared vision to ensure all adults in

Gwent are safeguarded effectively through partnership working and community engagement.

6.5 Preventative focus

The work undertaken by the Social Services Directorate looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having a proactive rather than reactive approach to service planning can also help with planning resources.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

Blaenau Gwent fully participates in the Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards.

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental Safeguarding Leads meetings help ensure all departments within the Authority are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and are kept updated with any emerging issues or trends within safeguarding.

6.8 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

Not applicable.

6.9a Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment *(complete an impact assessment to consider how the decision might help to reduce the inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage).*

All service provision and functions that sit under social services are subject to socio economic disadvantages for example, low income, material and area deprivation. All programmes work towards addressing these disadvantages.

6.9b Equality Impact Assessment

The overarching vision is to support the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. With the aim of building resilient individuals, resilient families and resilient communities.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The Local Safeguarding Network Group is a sub group of the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board. This group is made up of multi-agency representation from within Blaenau Gwent who monitors and reviews the safeguarding information and performance.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

The following hyperlink provides further details on the governance and structure arrangements: <https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk>

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Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Joint Education and Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding)**

Date of meeting: **21st January 2022**

Report Subject: **Safeguarding - Vulnerable Learners**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**

Report Submitted by: **Sarah Dixon – Safeguarding in Education Manager and Michelle Jones – Strategic Education Improvement Manager**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
		12.01.22			21.01.22			

1. **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise strategies being used to safeguard vulnerable learners and to provide relevant performance data, particularly in response to COVID-19.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.2 Members will be aware of the emergency response to the COVID-19 situation, including the repurposing and subsequent reopening of schools.
 - 2.3 On 20th March 2020, all schools across Wales closed, and were re-purposed to provide provision for vulnerable learners and children of critical workers.
 - 2.4 The Welsh Government provided a definition of vulnerable children, which allowed flexibility for consideration of other children identified locally. Vulnerable children included Children Looked After, those on the Child Protection register, those on a Care and Support Plan, those open to Families First, those open to the Youth Service, those identified through Operation Encompass, young carers, and those identified by schools as vulnerable.
 - 2.5 During this first lockdown period, schools were re-purposed as hubs and Children's Services were required to prioritise their contact with those families being supported through a statutory service. Children on the child protection register and children looked after were considered for places at a school hub. Education and Children's Services worked closely together to identify those children requiring a hub placement.
 - 2.6 Schools re-opened to all learners in the Autumn term 2020.
 - 2.7 During the second lockdown period in the Spring term 2021, measures established in the first lockdown period to meet the safeguarding needs of vulnerable learners were re-introduced. In addition, there was greater

flexibility in the criteria for accessing a school hub placement and a wider range of learners were able to access this provision.

- 2.8 Schools once again re-opened to all learners from Summer term 2021.
- 2.9 A Renewal and Recovery action plan has been established. One of the key priorities within this plan is supporting vulnerable learners.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option 1** – Members consider and accept the report.

Option 2 – Members provide comments in relation to any improvements that can be made.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

Education is a strategic priority and key to facilitating delivery of the Corporate Plan. One of the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan is for every child to have the best start in life. The Council seeks to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people, so that their progress is in line with ambitious expectations. Safeguarding learners is a statutory function associated with Education.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

Failure of educational establishments to adopt rigorous arrangements for safeguarding poses significant potential risk to children and other education users. Settings are required to have safeguarding policies and procedures in place, reviewed annually, in accordance with local and national guidance.

Importantly, the Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Services Safeguarding in Education Policy is reviewed annually and adopted by all schools.

5.3 **Legal**

Under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, Local Authorities, governing bodies of maintained schools and FE institutions must have regard to Welsh Government Circular 272/2021, 'Keeping Learners Safe', for the purpose of meeting their duties, and should exercise their functions in a way that takes into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the responsibilities in terms of the promotion of well-being, places a duty on

local authorities to arrange or provide for services which contribute to the prevention of abuse or neglect and ensures all agencies give sufficient priority to safeguarding.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct staffing or workforce implications arising from this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

- 6.1.1 At the onset of COVID, there were 62 children on the child protection register and 129 children looked after on roll in Blaenau Gwent's schools. These children would, therefore, have been eligible for a hub placement. The number accessing a school hub placement was variable on a daily basis and changed in response to changing need.
- 6.1.2 A daily Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) was assigned to each hub and safeguarding contact information and procedures for reporting were reinforced and shared widely. The Local Authority confirmed the contact information for DSPs, to enable accurate points of contact for Children's Services.
- 6.1.3 A weekly safeguarding bulletin was established to co-ordinate the safeguarding information being shared with schools. The bulletin was also used to reinforce the reporting arrangements for safeguarding concerns. A communication protocol was also developed to provide guidance on contact with learners and families during this lockdown period.
- 6.1.4 Schools formulated a list of vulnerable learners and made regular contact with those families. At a minimum, the contact took place fortnightly and in most cases, more frequently. Operation Encompass alerts continued to be shared and Education and Children's Services worked closely to ensure that safeguarding reports had been made and to consider any further action.
- 6.1.5 The Education Welfare Service provided support to schools with visits to vulnerable pupils where schools were unable to make contact. These visits resulted in referrals to Children's Services, housing, foodbanks and general support around accessing blended online lessons. A telephone line was also established so that pupils and parents could make direct contact with officers.
- 6.1.6 The Youth Service carried out a vulnerability assessment of all young people aged 11-16 on their database. Support included the allocation of youth workers, daily wellbeing contact, linking with parents to support the school meal process, sourcing essentials, accessing online counselling provision, online wellbeing tools and online learning. Youth Service and secondary schools worked together to ensure those vulnerable learners

who were not CLA or on the child protection register were supported. Year 6 transition support was also provided.

- 6.1.7 During this first lockdown period, multi-agency safeguarding meetings moved to a virtual model and schools were represented at these meetings. Attendance at Case Conferences improved following the move to a virtual platform, with Education/Schools represented at 94% of conferences from 2020-21 compared to 83% from 2019-20

Figure 1: Attendance by Education/Schools at Case Conferences

Q4 2020	70%
Q1 2020-2021	78%
Q2 2020-2021	95%
Q3 2020-2021	100%
Q4 2020-21	87%
Overall Attendance for Academic Year Sept – July 2020-21	94%

- 6.1.8 The CLA Education Service also adapted to the virtual working model. CLA children and their parents/carers were also supported through the CLA education team mentoring service. Children’s Services ensured that all children looked after by Blaenau Gwent had access to an appropriate IT device and mentoring support ensured that they were able to access online learning. Carers and parents were also supported to access the learning platforms.
- 6.1.9 The EHE officer supported families and learners initially with either phone calls or emails and this was later followed up by virtual meetings or doorstep visits. These visits checked on the wellbeing of learners and their families.
- 6.1.10 Children who offend and those at risk of offending were supported with regular telephone calls and virtual meetings from the Youth Offending Service. This contact addressed both wellbeing needs and any direct work that needed to be completed.
- 6.1.11 Schools reopened to all learners in Autumn 2020. Usual safeguarding arrangements applied. The safeguarding bulletin continued on a monthly basis as an effective mechanism to share safeguarding information. A monthly safeguarding in education bulletin is now embedded practice. Multi-agency meetings continued to be held on a virtual platform.
- 6.1.12 Throughout this period, Education continued to make referrals to Children’s Services. The number of referrals significantly reduced during the first lockdown period, (Quarter 1, 2020-21). As schools re-opened, the number of referrals into Children’s Services increased and the second lockdown period had less of an impact on this activity. During quarter 1 2021-22, schools reopened to all learners following the second lockdown

period, and there was a marked increase in referrals. This was followed by a decrease in Q2 2021-22 which was anticipated as the period included the Summer holiday period.

6.1.13 **Figure 2: Referrals into Children’s Services from Education**

Date	Number of Referrals
Q1 2020-2021 (lockdown)	32
Q2 2020-2021	93
Q3 2020-2021	158
Q4 2020-21 (lockdown)	135
Q1 2021-22	302
Q2 2021-22	134

6.1.14 For pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) provision, to ensure continuity of the FSM provision during the school, class and year group closure periods as a result of COVID-19, direct payment were made available for current and newly eligible approved applicants from April 2020, and this arrangement is ongoing. Application rounds are initiated on a termly basis, and prior to school holiday periods. The application process is online and available via the Council’s webpage, with communications and links distributed to parents via the individual school communication platforms.

6.1.15 The Council experienced a very high level of applications within the first few weeks, with over 100 applications per day. In order to manage this, additional staff resource was secured via the Education Transformation team, to review applications on a daily basis, and undertake the relevant checks i.e. eligibility in partnership with the Benefits team, and process applications and payments. Within the first month 1,800 eligible pupils received payments. The level of applications stabilised with a consistent flow, taking the total number of eligible pupils receiving the payment to 2,400 by the end of the Summer-term 2020. With school leavers removed, the number of pupils receiving the payment decreased to 2,200 during the Summer holiday period in 2020. Schools reopened in September 2020, at which point the Council saw a very high number of positive COVID cases in schools. Therefore, it was agreed that due to the high-level of pupils required to self-isolate, that an isolation payment of £3.90 per school day, would be made available to any FSM eligible pupils who were isolating. The Education Transformation team worked closely with schools to identify self-isolation entitlement and as a result a payment would be sent to the family. The latter continues to be implemented and monitored.

6.1.16 For each of the school holiday periods since the Autumn-term 2020, Welsh Government has committed funding for FSM direct payments of £19.50 per child, per week. Prior to each holiday period, the application round is opened for any newly eligible families to apply for the provision.

Figure 1 below, provides a timeline of implementation and uptake over the course of the last and current academic session:

Figure 3: Payment Timeline

Period	Number of Pupils Receiving Direct Payments	Notes
April 2020	1,800	
May 2020	2,000	
July 2020	2,400	
Summer Holiday Period 2020	2,200	2020 Year 11 leavers removed
October Half-term 2020	2,200	
Christmas Holiday Period 2020	2,342	
January 2020 - Average	2,383	
February Half-term 2021	2,400	
February – March 2021 Average	1,751	Staggered return to school – isolation payment average
Easter Holiday Period 2021	2,400	
Summer Holiday Period 2021	2,500	
October Half-term 2021	2,400	2021 Year 11 leavers removed

6.2 Present Position – Spring Term 2022

6.2.1 At the start of the new academic year transmission rates of the virus are increasing with the rate as at 5th January 2022 for Blaenau Gwent being 2,945 per 100,000 which is an increase of 2,177 per 100,000 in the previous 7 days. It is likely that the level of incidence will continue to increase post-Christmas break. As always, the main priority for the Local Authority and all of our schools is to consider safety and minimise disruption to learning for our children and young people. The Local Authority continues to work closely with our Headteachers in Blaenau Gwent, to agree a common approach where possible. Welsh Government will continue to work with Local Authorities and schools to monitor the situation, ensuring to adapt guidance and operations accordingly over the course of the next few months.

Schools have been advised that they will need to continue to operate at the 'very high' risk level within the WG's Schools Infection Control Framework. Blaenau Gwent schools have been functioning at this level since October 2021. There is a commitment from the Council and its

schools to keep learners safe and provide quality education for our children and young people to improve their life chances, despite the challenges faced during the emergency crisis.

Given the recent high prevalence of the Omicron virus, in addition to the actions within the recovery and renewal plan, the following arrangements have been reintroduced to support vulnerable learners.

6.2.2 Free School Meals

During periods where children who are in receipt of Free School Meals cannot attend school due to a move to blended learning, families will be able to once again access direct payments. Families who are already in receipt of a direct payment do not need to reapply. The Local Authority will contact the family via the child's school when each new round of applications opens.

6.2.3 Critical Worker and Vulnerable Learners

Over the course of the early part of the Spring term, there may be occasions where schools need to move to blended learning as a result of staff absence. Arrangements to co-ordinate this are underway to collate and retain information relating to critical worker childcare demand, and use it in order to inform and develop a childcare provision needs assessment in consideration of resourcing and capacity requirements. Generally, if schools feel that they are able to accommodate the demand for critical worker provision, then Education's Inclusion team and Social Services will advise and support regarding vulnerable learners. The Education Directorate will establish a corporate group consisting of Education, Health and Safety and Environmental Health, to work with the school in question. The purpose of the group will be to establish risk management and tolerance levels, agree and support schools to coordinate and prioritise critical worker and vulnerable learner provision.

In addition, LA will work with schools to establish and agree a critical worker priority list - taking account of the local workforce, which can be used when schools become overwhelmed in order to prioritise access. The current Welsh Government guidance on critical workers can be found here: <https://gov.wales/identifying-children-critical-workers-guidance>

6.2.4 Recovery and Renewal Plan

Within the Education Recovery and Renewal plan supporting vulnerable learners is a high priority. The current version of the plan is shown below and will continue to be updated with progress reported at regular intervals to the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

6.3 Expected Outcome for the Public.

There is a commitment from the Council and its schools to keep learners safe and provide quality education for our children and young people to improve their life chances, despite the challenges faced during the emergency crisis.

- 6.4 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**
Children's Services and Education work closely together to ensure safeguarding in education and support for vulnerable learners is a priority.
- 6.5 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
Safeguarding is a priority at all times and one of the key priorities of the Recovery and Renewal action plan is supporting vulnerable learners.
- 6.6 **Preventative focus**
Throughout school closure periods, procedures were in place to ensure proactive contact was made with the families of vulnerable learners, to identify any support or safeguarding needs early. Specific arrangements continue to be in place to support vulnerable learners during periods of disruption.
- 6.7 **Collaboration / partnership working**
Children's Services and the Education Directorate have worked closely together throughout this period.
- 6.8 **Integration (across service areas)**
The emergency response is a 'One Council' approach.
- 6.9 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**
Any physical works planned and undertaken within education settings are planned in order to take account of decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions.
- 6.10a **Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment**
Throughout the pandemic the number of families eligible for FSMs has increased, which suggests an increasing number of vulnerable pupils across Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.11b. **Equality Impact Assessment**
There are no adverse impacts in relation to the data in this report.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 Regular safeguarding reports are presented to Joint Education and Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding).

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Recovery and Renewal Action Plan – Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee – 19th October 2021
- Keeping Learners Safe - [Keeping Learners Safe \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/keeping-learners-safe)