

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING) – 26TH APRIL, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: H. Trollope
D. Bevan
M. Cook
G.A. Davies
M. Day
K. Hayden
J. Hill
J. Holt
C. Meredith
M. Moore
J.C. Morgan
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Summers

Co-opted Member

A. Williams

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Strategic Education Improvement Manager
Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
Service Manager Inclusion
Service Manager Development & Commissioning
Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change
Service Manager Children's Services (Safeguarding)
Adult Safeguarding Manager
Safeguarding in Education Manager
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

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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. Collier, G.L. Davies, P. Edwards, L. Elias and D. Wilkshire.</p> <p>Tim Baxter - Co-opted Member</p> <p>Corporate Director of Social Services</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>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 8th October, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p>The Chair referred to item 5 on page 6 of the minutes and pointed out that the comment regarding Covid-19 should have been minuted before the heading relating to the Action Sheet – 2nd December, 2019.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET - 8TH OCTOBER, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) held on 8th October, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	

No. 6

SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – 1ST APRIL TO 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Director Social Services and Corporate Director Education 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 December 2020.

Social Services

The Service Manager, Children’s Services (Safeguarding) spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained within the Social Services Safeguarding Performance information.

In relation to the format of the report, the Chair suggested changes to the layout of the covering report, that when it referred to graphs or tables in the appendix, e.g. Figure 1.1, the related graph or table is pulled into the report from the appendix, and in relation to paragraph 6.2.3 – Child Protection the Chair suggested a change to the wording from “no cause for concern” to “these figures fall within expected levels given the current situation”. The Service Manager took these points on board and would look to change the report format for future reports.

A Member referred to the police being the highest referrer to Social Services and enquired how the referrals were monitored to ensure they should actually be referred. The Service Manager said that they constantly look at this area and under the Early Action Together, which was an initiative from the Police & Crime Commissioner for the Detective Sergeant to be part of the IAA service, part of that role was to critique and to quality assure the PPN (the referral method the police use). The police policies on making referrals differed from the Local Authority and as such when police were called to a property and there were children present, under their policies and procedures they were duty bound to refer that incident to Children’s Social Care, who would then decide if that referral needed statutory intervention or low level support. They work closely with partners within the police to try to support the police to make

professional judgements around whether to make a referral into statutory social care or consider whether lower tier preventative services would be more appropriate and were working towards a point where both service areas were happy with the approach being taken.

The Chair commented that this provided an added level of assurance for Members and welcomed police involvement in the IAA process to strengthen collaboration between the two areas. The Service Manager advised Members that they had now moved into the Hub model which had proved extremely successful in relation to other partners such as Health and Education in having that same level of support to provide the IAA service with information quickly to enable them to make the right decision at the right time. The Detective Sergeant would undertake checks on persons of interest or people the IAA may need additional information on, Health colleagues were able to do the same with regards to children and any adult concerns and Education were also getting on board to be part of the process and she felt that this was a very positive position moving forward.

A Member enquired regarding the number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) who were transitioning into Adult Services and also raised concerns regarding Senior Police Officers attendance at Corporate Parenting meetings. As the Corporate Parent there was a duty to provide support for Children Looked After at school disciplinary meetings and with the pandemic easing off he felt there may be a rise in Children Looked After needing more support in schools to stop them being permanently excluded. The Service Manager said that Figure 2.4 on the Performance Report showed the age range of children on the Child Protection Register, the 16 to 18 age range represented the lowest number of children on the CPR. The 10 to 15 age range were the highest group with 14 female and 10 male, and for those teenagers about to come into adulthood she hoped that the risks would have been extensively worked through before they reached adulthood. She took on board the Members comment around transition as the transition into Adult Services was crucial for all groups but especially Children Looked After with quite complex needs and mental health issues. There were two females in the 16 to 18 age range in quarter 3 on the CPR and as part of the Child Protection Plan consideration would

be given to whether those support needs would continue into adulthood.

In relation to Corporate Parenting the Service Manager said this was a valid point to raise and where children were subject to any internal processes within schools there were Children Looked After Education Mentors, an Education Co-ordinator and also a Safeguarding Manager in Education and would take this point back to senior management with regards to the Education service to advise whether or not they needed to attend those meetings with regards to Social Services children and consider if there were capacity issues around officer attendance at those meetings.

With regards to issues rising as children return to school the Service Manager informed Members that an additional two Social Workers had been appointed in schools there were now four in total, and their role was to consider the needs of children and families at an early stage and that included children and families that had been suffering through the Covid pandemic. Having that ability within schools for children and families to speak with Social Workers to address any issues, then those interventions provided some positive outcomes for children and families.

A Member raised concerns regarding issues with parent's behaviour in the school yard and outside of the school, there had been instances of parents speaking unsuitably with their young children in the school yard, traffic incidents, threats and cyber bullying etc. Some schools were now erecting signage to ensure that parents were aware of the zero tolerance policy. The Service Manager said that schools were best placed to form a judgement on how best to handle behaviours of that kind. If one parent was threatening another then that would potentially be a police matter and if anyone felt that children were suffering as a result of parental bad behaviour or caught in the crossfire between disputing parents' then it was everybody's business to make a referral into Social Services. When that referral was looked at in detail it may be that low level support or referral onto other agencies might be the outcome.

Another Member also raised concerns regarding the increased incidents in and outside of schools and he felt that there needed to be a protocol, with guidance for schools to follow, between the school and Social Services with regard to serious incidents outside of schools. The Service Manager reiterated that anybody who witnessed something or felt uncomfortable with or concerned about could make a referral to Social Services. If schools were witness to bad language and bad behaviour she felt there was no reason why the school could not speak with the parent about acceptable language and behaviour in and outside the school grounds. In the case of cars causing Health & Safety issues, incidents should be reported through the PCSO's to the Community Safety Partnerships.

As this issue was across two Directorates, the Service Manager commented that guidance that may currently be in existence could be strengthened around the points raised.

In relation to traffic management in schools the Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change explained there was a specific group that managed and monitored issues, and when schools report traffic issues Wardens were allocated schools on the basis of priority. She was aware that monitoring and reporting was being undertaken and schools did address issues directly with parents. She advised there was a priority list of works that were planned to be undertaken at each of the schools to relieve some of the traffic issues. The Member commented that traffic abuse was only one of the issues raised and due to the pandemic the school gates were closed early morning and felt that most incidents occurred outside of the school gates.

The Strategic Education Improvement Manager said that schools were well placed to look at children's needs in a contextual setting and could pick up on these points around potential abuse, online, verbal or traffic etc. and when such incidents were looked at through a broader lens this could allow colleagues to have a better understanding on the impact on the child.

Education Services

The Strategic Education Improvement Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained within the Education Performance information. She advised Members that it had not been possible to present the usual information and data normally collated through schools, as schools had been responding to the challenges of the pandemic, however, she assured Members that schools had been reminded of the need to report data with the expectation that that information would be presented to this Committee. Work was also being undertaken in relation to the development of an online system and prior to the pandemic a 'my concerns' option model had been purchased which sits within the School Information Management System (SIMS) that would enable schools to regularly report and hold data on an electronic basis, and advised Members of the intention to present a report to this Committee in the near future.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the approach and information detailed in the report provided be accepted.

No. 7

ADULT SAFEGUARDING REPORT FROM 1ST APRIL 2020 TO 31ST MARCH 2021

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services which was presented to provide Scrutiny Members with Safeguarding Performance information relating to Adult Services from 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2021.

The Adult Safeguarding Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. She advised that several changes had taken place in Adult Safeguarding over the last year. The All Wales New Safeguarding procedures had been introduced in April 2020 and the new procedures supported the individual to be the centre of the safeguarding process and to support their desired outcomes and what was important to them to keep themselves safe. As the process had changed considerably so had the reporting and data collected, and this year did not show a breakdown of figures for the previous year to look at comparisons.

A Member referred to vulnerable adults and enquired if links to unofficial partners such as community groups set up in the pandemic to deliver food parcels etc. would continue to ensure that no vulnerable adults were overlooked. The Adult Safeguarding Manager commended the work of the community groups throughout the pandemic and was aware that IAA and Supporting People had been involved in these community groups and agreed that these links needed to be maintained moving forward. She felt it was important for Adult Safeguarding to tap into community groups to raise awareness and also to speak with individuals who were receiving the service, as they were extremely vulnerable and as the data showed the number of people self-referring for Adult Safeguarding was very low, and this was something that needed to be looked at with a programme that was accessible for individuals who received the service and working closely with community groups could help Adult Safeguarding understand who were the most vulnerable adults and how to reach them.

The Service Manager Development & Commissioning added that in relation to communication and awareness raising, extensive work was being undertaken with other local authorities and the team were also continually updating web sites. He felt that part of the recovery phase would be to strengthen the building blocks already in place and communication and awareness raising would be a clear focus as part of the business plan moving forward.

In response to a Member's question regarding only reporting on the main category of abuse, the Adult Safeguarding Manager clarified that with the data reported to Committee they could only now report on the primary category of abuse. When completing a duty to report form into Social Services, several categories of abuse could be ticked, but Adult Safeguarding would only report to Committee on the primary category of abuse.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report as provided be accepted.