Executive Committee and Council only
Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.07.21

Committee:	**Executive Committee**
Date of meeting:	**21st July 2021**
Report Subject:	**Safeguarding Performance Information for Social Services and Education – 1st April to 31st March 2021.**
Portfolio Holder:	**Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services** **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**
Report Submitted by:	**Alison Ramshaw, Service Manager, Children's Services** **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)**
24.06.21	01.07.21	06.07.21			14.07.21	21.07.21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Executive Committee with safeguarding performance information and analysis from Children's Social Services and Education from 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 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 – 31st March, 2021 and Education information from 1st January – 31st March, 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 and then to the Executive Committee.

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 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 during Q1 (*1,113*) and further increases in Q2 (1,292), Q3 (*1,363*) and Q4 (1,368). The data indicates a levelling off of referral rates for Q4 although the rise in referrals from the start of the year through to the end of the year is currently being monitored and similar pictures have been observed across neighbouring authorities. The COVID pandemic is likely to have had an impact on families and may be a reason for the rise.

Figure 1.2: Shows the source of the referrals. As in previous quarters, police remain the highest referring agency (40%% in Q1, 39% in Q2, 35% in Q3) and 36% in Q4), followed by Health (17%) and followed by Individuals (12%).

Figure 1.3: shows the numbers of referrals received into the department on open cases. During Q1 the number increased to 824 from 817 in Q2 this number increased to 981 in Q3, and 1,055 in Q4. Again the COVID pandemic is the likely cause for rise in referrals on open cases. The LA rag rated open cases during the first lockdown and when services resumed in line with WG guidance the LA did experience more families requiring intervention and support as services became more available to them

6.2.2   **Youth Services**

Figure 1.4: Shows the numbers of youth service referrals during Q's 1, 2 and 3. The figure shows that a reduction in referrals 15 in Q1 to 8 in Q4.

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.

6.2.3   **Child Protection**

Figure 2.2: Gives a summary of the number of children on the child protection register the numbers of registrations and deregistration is also included. There were a total of 62 children on the child protection register in Q1 to 33 families. This accounted for an additional 1 child being registered in this quarter. The numbers of children on the child protection register increased by 14 to 76 in Q2 involving 39 families.

Q3 saw 68 children on the child protection register to 33 families, which was a decrease of 8 from the previous quarter. The number of children reduced to 52 in Q4 to 24 families.
62 in Q1 (2020)

76 in Q2 (2020)
68 in Q3 (2020)
52 in Q4 (2021)

The reduction in child protection registration during Q4 has been closely monitored. 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.

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 increased in Q1 to 33 children to 19 families. Of the 33 children subject to child protection case conference 32 were registered.

51 review conferences were held in Q1, 23 children continued registration with 28 children who ceased to be registered.

The numbers of initial conferences held in Q2 decreased to 30 children to 16 families. Of the 30 children subject to child protection case conference 29 were registered.

45 review conferences were held in Q3 and 27 children continued registration with 18 who ceased to be registered.

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.

29 review conferences were held in Q4. 29 children continued registration with 26 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 Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4, with 100% of conferences held within timescales.

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.

6.3   **Education Information**

6.3.1   <u>**Overview**</u>

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 Members are provided with greater clarity on 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 forwards the Directorate intends to review the data presented to this committee and as such it is likely that further reports will encapsulate a much broader data set.

Turning to the reporting period for this report i.e. January 2021 to March 2021, Members will be aware that schools did not commence their gradual return to face to face learning until after the February half term and as such this report is limited in the data that can be shared. However, all schools were written to at the start of the Summer term advising them that the routine data collection would be reinstated from 1st April and thus it is anticipated that moving forwards further reports will capture all data sets.

Bullying Incidents and Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI)

6.3.2

<u>**Numbers of restrictive physical interventions**</u>

6.3.3

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 Spring Term 2021.

The number of RPIs in the Spring term was 3. This is a significant decrease from data previously reported but this reduction is to be expected during this time, as schools were closed to the majority of learners due to COVID restrictions, only partially reopening prior to the end of the Spring term.

Regular monitoring of incident forms is undertaken by the Safeguarding in Education Manager to ensure the use of physical intervention is appropriate. <u>**Numbers of bullying incidents reported which have led to exclusions:**</u>

6.3.4

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 January and March there were no exclusions from school where bullying was recorded as the primary reason for the exclusion. In fact, there have been no exclusions from school for bullying since the summer term 2019.

Whilst this is an improving picture it should be noted that schools have had periods of closure since March 2020.

Quality Assurance Visits

6.3.5

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

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.

As such, quality assurance visits to Local Government Education Settings (LGSES) include 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" Activity is undertaken by the Safeguarding in Education Manager to test the robustness of the safeguarding systems and to ascertain a level of assurance.

During the Spring Term 2021,1 out of a projected 4 QA visits took place. This was held virtually during the school closure period, which directly impacted on the remaining visits. No significant safeguarding issues were identified during this visit, providing reassurance that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place. Whilst formal QA visits were impacted during this period, schools engaged well with the termly meeting for designated safeguarding persons and with training provided for Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to development of knowledge and understanding of safeguarding matters.

Estyn Judgements

6.3.6

 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 concerns. In coming to a judgment Inspectors will consider a multitude of evidence such as;

- whether the schools safeguarding arrangements protect all children
- 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 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 forwards it is anticipated that Estyn visits will commence in the near future.

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

Operation Encompass

6.3.7 **Figure 4.5:** shows the number of domestic abuse incidents reported during the period During the period there were 141 occurrences involving 185 children. From the data received this time it is not possible to break this down further to understand the age profile of the children affected.

Of these (185) children, a few (13.5% 25) experienced repeat incidents during the period.

However, of the children affected during the period:
- Very few (3.4% 4) cases were high risk
- A few cases (17.9% 21) were medium risk
- Many cases (81.1% 95) were a low risk

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.

Compliance Reporting

The Police compliance target for recording the school name on the PPN is 90%. However, at the end of the current period the compliance rating has improved with a school compliance rate of 75.8%.

Elected Home Educated (EHE):

6.3.8 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.

Figure 4.6: The total number of children electively home educated as of 31st March 2021 was 94. At the same point in 2020 the number was 77.

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 Summer, Autumn and Spring term. There is a decrease of 7 pupils coming out of school when compared to the data for the previous two terms.

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 Spring Summer and Autumn term. There is an increase of 29 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.

School Attendance

6.3.9 Figure 4.10 shows the primary and secondary attendance for the Spring term. Due to 'Covid' it would not be appropriate to compare the data to the same period last year as schools have only been open for hub provision for the majority of the Spring term. A comparison to other regions in the South East Wales has therefore been provided for members.

It should be noted that it is difficult to have any accurate comparative data for the Spring term as both hub provision and schools reopening plans varied across the region.

School Exclusions

6.3.10 Figure 4.11 shows the primary exclusion data for the Spring term. Whilst the number of exclusions are relatively low, the rate of exclusions is the 3rd highest in the consortia.

Figure 4.12 shows the secondary exclusion data for the Spring term. Whilst the number of exclusions are low, the rate of exclusions is the 4th highest in the consortia.

Due to 'Covid' it would not be appropriate to compare the data to the same period last year. A comparison to other regions in the South East Wales has therefore been provided for members.

Corporate – Education

6.4 **DBS Escalations**

6.4.1 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 of 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 providing an overview of the position across the education directorate and schools.

With reference to the 1 non-compliance issue regarding DBS this relates to an exam invigilator who is not working as the usual arrangements for exams were suspended this time last year.

VAWDA SV

6.4.2 Figure 532 provides the training uptake for Group 1 training by schools. This confirms that the current level of take up is 77%

Expected outcome for the public

7.1 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.

Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

7.2 The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental Safeguarding Leads meetings which are due to be reconvened help ensure all departments within the Authority are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and are kept undated 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 Q's 2 and 3 partnership working with the police continues to progress through the Early Action Together programme and the Operation Encompass initiative. The Detective Sergeant (DS) in post continues to make positive contributions to the safeguarding process. Strategy Discussions are now being held in a timely manner (within 24hours) and information relevant to safeguarding decision making happens in a much more efficient manner.

Regarding the quality assurance element to the DS role, it has been reported through the Early Action Together steering group meetings that the police are feeling better supported in the completion of the PPN's and this has been evidenced with the Information Advice and Assistance service as the quality of information in the PPN's is much improved

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.

8   **EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)**
N/A

8.1   **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
Append 1 – BG Safeguarding Reporting Template 2020-2021