

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