

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **19<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

Report Subject: **Safeguarding Performance Information (including Social Services 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March and Education Spring Term–2023 and Corporate Services)**

Portfolio Holder: **All Cabinet Members**

Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director of Social Services and Luisa Munro-Morris, Interim Corporate Director of Education**

| Reporting Pathway           |                           |                          |                            |                               |                    |          |         |                      |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Governance Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Cabinet  | Council | Other (please state) |
| 23.06.23                    | 28.06.23                  | 29.06.23                 |                            |                               | 18.07.23           | 19.07.23 |         |                      |

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with safeguarding performance information and analysis from across the Council but with specific information relating to Children’s and Adult’s Social Services from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, and Education for the Spring term 2023 (Appendix 1). The information at Appendix 1 also includes detail on the current processes for monitoring safeguarding at a corporate level.
- 1.2 Monitoring and reporting systems are well developed within both Social Services and Education allowing the departments to track information, and evidence that the safeguarding agenda remains a priority for the Local Authority as a whole and to identify safeguarding areas within the Authority which require further development to improve safeguarding practice and procedures.
- 1.3 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:
- Corporate Services for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023
  - Social Services for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023;
  - Education for the Spring term 2023; and
- 2.2 This report is written to provide a greater focus on the safeguarding agenda and its importance across all service areas within the Council.
- 2.3 The Corporate Leadership Team and Elected Members agreed for safeguarding information to be reported to the People Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet after each school term.

2.4 In April 2016 the Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB) and the South-East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB) became a statutory Board as set out in Part 7 of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. The role of the Board is to set the strategic direction in relation to multi agency safeguarding. The Board carries out these core functions through policy direction, monitoring the effectiveness within agencies, commissioning practice reviews, and disseminating learning to practitioners to ensure safeguarding is high on the agenda at all levels of the workforce.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 This report was presented to CLT on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2023. This report will also be considered by the People Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.

#### 3.2 **Option 1**

- (a) Accept the approach and information detailed in the report (appendix 1) as provided; and
- (b) agree the revised Safeguarding in Education Policy as shown in Appendix 3.

#### **Option 2**

- (a) Consider the information provided and provide comments on where improvement can be made to the current monitoring processes; and
- (b) provide suggested amendment to the revised Safeguarding in Education Policy, prior to approval.

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

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

- Corporate Plan
- Corporate Risk Register
- Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy
- Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy

4.2 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. Social Services work to a number of regional and national safeguarding procedures.

### 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 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. Similarly, the Education Directorate risk register captures the risks in respect of Education and is again included for reference in the data pack.

### 5.3 **Legal**

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into force on 6th April 2016. The Act provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales.

### 5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no human resources implications attached to this report.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

### 6.1 **Performance Information**

Performance and data is provided within the report and the accompanying data pack.

#### 6.1.1 **Corporate Services**

#### 6.1.2 **Overview**

In November 2022, the Council received a report from Audit Wales on our safeguarding arrangements. This report was a follow up to a previous review undertaken in 2019.

6.1.3 Audit Wales found that, 'the pandemic further delayed the Council's response to the 2019 report. Although it has taken recent action to strengthen its corporate safeguarding arrangements, the Council has not yet fully addressed our previous recommendations. The Council recognises the need to strengthen corporate safeguarding arrangements beyond the Social Services and Education directorates. The Council developed an action plan to address the outstanding recommendations but, due to the pandemic, most of the planned work did not begin until early 2022.

6.1.4 From this, a further two recommendations were received for implementation:

- The Council needs to take further action to fully comply with the recommendations in our October 2019 follow up report on corporate arrangements for safeguarding of children.
- The Council needs to strengthen its monitoring arrangements of third parties so it can assure itself that they comply with the Council's safeguarding policies. It should consider whether a self-assessment tool like that recently used by Council directorates can be used with third parties to better understand compliance.

6.1.5 Significant progress has been made to respond to these additional recommendations. A key aspect of this has been the re-purposing of the Strategic Corporate Safeguarding Leads Group who have reviewed their terms of reference to ensure its purpose and objectives are clear. There is

also a designated safeguarding lead in each directorate who are represented on this group.

6.1.6 The Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed and is available on the front pages of both the internet and intranet sites and contractors now receive a copy of the policy when tendering. OD oversee robust arrangements for the safe recruitment and DBS renewals of staff employed directly by the Council and safeguarding is now included in the Council's induction programme.

6.1.7 Detail of the Corporate safeguarding information is found in section 6 of appendix 1 and includes:

- DBS Compliance;
- VAWDASV Corporate Training;
- The Corporate Risk relating to safeguarding; and
- Progress to date of the Audit Wales recommendations.

6.1.8 ***Children's Social Services***

6.1.9 **Referrals to Social Services**

**Figure 1:1** Shows the number of referrals made to social services. The chart demonstrates an increase in referrals between Q2 (1,686), Q3 (1,710) and Q4 (1,981). The data is indicative of previous trends where there has been a noted continued increase in referral rates into Children's Services. It is noted there was a slight decrease in Q2 however, despite this, the upward rise of referrals has since continued with Q4 demonstrating the highest number of referrals received in all Q's reported on within the chart. Referral rates continue to be monitored and similar increasing referral patterns are being reported within neighbouring Gwent authorities.

6.1.10 **Figure 1.1A** Shows the number of individuals associated with the referrals received, the number of individuals who have had 2 or more referrals during the month and the highest number of referrals received by an individual during the month. As noted in Figure 1.1, the number of total referrals has increased in Q4 therefore when considering months Jan, Feb and Mar 2023, it is not surprising to identify an overall increase in the number of individuals who have been referred. When considering an average across the Q's, Q4 has a lower average number of individuals who have received 2 or more referrals (65) in comparison to Q3 (70). On average the highest number of referrals for an individual is the same for Q3 and Q4 (5.3).

6.1.11 **Figure 1.2:** Shows the source of the referrals. As in previous quarters, Police remain the highest referring agency (Q2 35%, Q3 35% and Q4 29.9%). Health, Other Agency, and Education referrals are grouped closely within these quarters as being the second, third and fourth highest referring agency. Ongoing joint working with Police through hub meetings allows for regular discussion and monitoring of Police referrals alongside a Detective Sergeant from Gwent Police being co-located in Children's IAA, to quality assure all PPN's received.

Referral thresholds from partner agencies are being considered on a regional basis as part of a task and finish group which has been set up under the Gwent Safeguarding Board. The task and finish group are currently looking at the development of a regional Duty to Report (DTR) threshold document to act as an aid for professional judgement on when to appropriately submit a referral to Children's Services. This work is in its infancy however it is hoped the creation of this document will lead to an eventual reduction in inappropriate referrals being made to Children's Services.

6.1.12 **Figure 1.3:** Shows the numbers of referrals received into the department on open cases. The graph identifies a steady line for the receipt of additional referrals on open cases across all 4 Q's in 2022/23 in comparison to the steady increase in overall referrals received by the department. Interestingly there is a more noticeable gap comparison between the referrals received and referrals on open cases in Q4.

#### 6.1.13 **Child Protection**

6.1.14 **Figures 2.1 & 2.2:** Provides a summary of the number of children on the child protection register with the numbers of registrations and deregistration's also being referenced within Fig 2.2.

There was a total of 62 children on the child protection register in Q4 which demonstrates a reduction of 11 from Q3.

During Q4 there have been a total of 31 new registrations which is a decrease of 13 compared to Q3. There was an increase of 4 de-registrations in Q4 compared to Q3.

Q4 figures evidence a reduced number of new registrations in comparison to all other Q's, particularly Q3, which may be attributable the service reconfiguration in Children's Services. The development of the Statutory Assessment Team (SAT) within the pilot model has enabled new referral allocation for under 14's to be streamlined to one team, focusing on undertaking thorough child protection investigations and consent based integrated assessments to promote children and families getting the right help at the right time. Additionally, the development of 2 locality care planning teams has meant an increased focus on care plan management of long-term cases which enables work to be undertaken to avoid registration or promote deregistration when safe and appropriate. This will continue to be monitored via the pilot review meetings being held to closely evaluate the pilot structure and what impact this is having on service delivery.

The outcome focused; strengths-based practice model continues to be well embedded within children's services with a focus on priority risk management. This continues to support a risk management culture which appears to be influencing consistency within child protection registrations when considering numbers of children on the child protection register across the year.

- 6.1.15 **Figure 2.3:** Shows the categories of abuse for which children's names are registered for on the Child Protection Register over the past year. Neglect and Emotional/Psychological abuse remain the highest categories of abuse across all 4 Q's. This is typically in keeping with national statistics for child protection categorisations.

It is noted that sexual abuse is notoriously underrepresented as a registration category for children on the child protection register. Child Sexual Abuse is key priority for the Gwent Safeguarding Board and a recent thematic audit has been undertaken across the region to consider Local Authority responses to child protection referrals where sexual abuse/harm is the reason concern. The Safeguarding Service Manager undertook a dip sample of 5 cases meeting this requirement within Blaenau Gwent; positively there were assurances that operational teams had responded appropriately with thorough investigations being undertaken regarding this area of concern.

- 6.1.16 **Figure 2.4:** relates to the age and gender breakdown of children on the child protection register with Males aged 10-15 being the highest (16), followed by females in the 5-9 and 1-4 age brackets (14).

6.1.17 **Adults Social Services**

- 6.1.18 **Figure 3.1** relates to the number of reports received of an 'adult suspected of being at risk' during the given period (1/1/23 - 31/3/23) was 205. During the same period for the previous year (2021/2022) there was a total of 122 which represents an increase of over 40% in quarter 4 compared with the same period in the previous year and an overall annual increase of 13%.

It is important to consider the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic over the last few years and more recently the significant challenges for citizens, communities and services as a result of the cost-of-living crisis which could be the key factors contributing to the increase in referrals. Despite these relentless and anticipated challenges, we continue to work tirelessly to ensure that essential services remain operational to provide support, care and protection to children and adults in our communities.

- 6.1.19 **Figure 3.2** relates to the number of referrals received within the different categories of abuse or neglect. As in previous years the most referrals are received for females over the age of 65. The category of abuse most reported is neglect following by physical abuse. The category of abuse with the least reports is sexual abuse which has been the situation for the last four years.

The regional Quality Assurance sub-group continues to support the development of the performance management and quality assurance framework identifying any emerging safeguarding themes and challenges that may become more amplified and require more targeted attention moving forward.

- 6.1.20 **Figure 3.3** relates to the places where the alleged abuse has occurred. The most common setting for alleged abuse occurring was in care home settings,

followed very closely by an individual's own home. This split is common and fairly consistent with last years' data. The care home settings include residential, nursing or respite care whereby the alleged perpetrators could be paid carers/nurses, family and or other service users. The alleged perpetrators within an individual's own home also range between being professionals/paid carers, friends, or family.

Adults Safeguarding team has adopted a similar approach to children services by developing a quality assurance approach into reviewing cases to ensure appropriate safeguarding measures and investigations are carried out with due diligence.

- 6.1.21 **Figure 3.4** relates to the persons alleged to be responsible for abuse. In quarter 4, the figures show that 136 perpetrators were 'not known' which is an increase of over 50%. This accounts for referrals where there is no specific alleged perpetrator and systematic/organisation issues have alleged to have caused possible abuse. There is a similar referral rate for the alleged perpetrators being professionals, other person or another service user. The Safeguarding team have recently implemented a system for recording practitioner concern referrals and this data will be made available from April 2023.

Over the course of the last three years, the lessons which were learned from regional adult practice reviews in relation to the commissioning of care have been shared with care home forums and providers, across Gwent. These improved links with care home providers now continue as core business for our Quality Assurance subgroup, which ensures that safeguarding mechanisms are in place and adhered to whilst care is commissioned, enabling us to achieve our intended outcomes in this area. In order to further share lessons learned from Operation Jasmine, in June 2022 we cascaded information emerging from the national, multi-agency, facilitated online reflection and learning event. We continue to consider how this learning should inform our provision of safeguarding training and awareness-raising campaigns.

- 6.1.22 **Figure 3.5:** identifies the number of referrals received are from a variety of agencies and sources. The majority of the referrals were submitted from provider agencies which is consistent with last year's data. The category marked other includes referrals from DWP, fire and rescue, anonymous referrals and financial Banks.

Safeguarding remains 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. The Contracts and Commissioning Team Manager and the three Contract Monitoring Officers are all fully trained non-criminal investigators and undertake investigations independently or jointly with colleagues depending on the complexity and size of the investigation, or, with health colleagues if there are nursing issues involved. Whether referrals progress to strategy meetings

and/or investigation, or are closed down as inappropriate safeguarding referrals, there is very often some preliminary investigation work and/or recommendations / performance issues with providers to be acted upon and followed up by the Commissioning Team.

6.1.23 **Figure 3.6** relates to the referrals of domestic abuse received to the Safeguarding team. There is a common and consistent theme that reports for female victims are higher than males. The figures for domestic abuse as shown relate to where the victim is considered as an 'adult at risk'. During this quarter there were 10 cases for domestic abuse compared with 5 in the same period as last year.

A strong link also remains with the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) partnership. Our close working relationships are also demonstrated with the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, and nationally recognised bodies such as Public Health Wales along with our regional volunteering agencies, Gwent Association of Volunteering Organisations (GAVO) and Torfaen Voluntary Alliance.

6.1.24 **Education**

6.1.25 **Overview**

Members will be aware that Blaenau Gwent Council and the 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 work that is undertaken in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are managed effectively and fulfil the requirements as set out in the Estyn framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES). This report is the second report that captures the broader data sets. Members will be aware that data presented within this written report is done so on an exception basis to bring key aspects of information to Members' attention and as such not all evidence in the supporting performance report will be included in this narrative.

6.1.26 Members will be aware that there continues to be ongoing industrial action short of strike (ASOS) which has impacted upon some of the data that would routinely be presented to Members. Where this is the case the relevant section of the report identifies this.

6.1.27 In addition, this report will also provide an overview of changes to Safeguarding policies (Appendix 3) that have been reviewed during this period with a small group of school Headteachers and DSP's. The policies for scrutiny are listed below along with a summary of the main changes to the respective policies:

- LGES Safeguarding Policy for 2023/24

6.1.28 Main changes to the policy are:

- The addition to the start of the school template (Appendix 1) that it is to be read in conjunction with the whole Local Government Education Services Safeguarding Policy.



- The Youth Service Appendix (Appendix 3) is updated to reflect changes in contact details within the Youth Service.
- The addition of a communication protocol to the practitioner concern appendix (Appendix 6)

6.1.29 Members will be aware that during this period Estyn published their report on the outcome of the LGES inspection during this period, that has already been shared with People Scrutiny. However, for completeness in terms of performance below is an extract from the report in relation to Safeguarding that confirms that there are appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place.

“Officers and elected members are committed to safeguarding young people in their local authority. There is an appropriate safeguarding culture within the local authority. All officers and elected members receive suitable safeguarding training. The way in which education and children’s services work together has contributed well to improving multi-agency working and the support schools receive to manage the needs of pupils and their families more effectively. The advice and guidance provided to schools by officers is valued by school leaders and helps them to respond to safeguarding concerns appropriately. Elected members are beginning to develop their understanding of safeguarding in education and challenge appropriately the content of reports they receive.”

6.1.30 **Section 05 Figure 1.2 Estyn** The data set for recording the outcomes of Estyn inspection visits has been amended as judgements are no longer provide against inspection areas. However, where Estyn identifies concerns in relation to health and safety and or safeguarding arrangements, they may issue a letter and include a recommendation within the inspection report. During the period two inspections were completed and both inspections resulted in a recommendation to improve, and a letter being issued. In both cases the concerns were in relation to the physical site / premises considerations and remedial action has been taken to address these concerns. In addition, the Education Directorate has undertaken a review of premises/ site considerations to ensure that where such issues are identified by schools that appropriate timely action is taken to mitigate any concerns. This has resulted in the identification of further works on some sites which has either been completed or is in train with interim safeguards in place until the matter has been rectified.

6.1.31 **Section 05 Figure 1.3.1/1.3.2: Safeguarding Policy** - The Local Government Education Services Safeguarding policy is reviewed annually. All schools are expected to adopt the safeguarding policy through their governing body and all schools have a safeguarding policy in place. By the end of the Spring term 2023, 64% of schools had adopted the most recent safeguarding policy for 2022-23.

6.1.32 **Section 05 Figure 3.1.1: Out of County Placements** - All out of county placements are safeguard assessed prior to any learner being placed in the setting. The process for independent settings involves a review of: Estyn reports for the setting, safeguarding policy and safeguarding quality assurance visit information. A further independent setting was quality assured for safeguarding in the Spring term for safeguarding with no concerns arising as a result.

For out of county Local Authority maintained provision, following scrutiny of the school SG policy and Estyn report, contact is made with relevant Local Authorities where further information is needed for safeguarding assurance. During the period no concerns were identified.

- 6.1.33 **Section 05 Figure 4.1.1: EWC Registration** - There were; 2 EWC registrations that were incomplete prior to staff starting their roles within their respective schools. These followed the agreed escalation process and were fully resolved.
- 6.1.34 **Section 05 Figure 4.2.1/4.2.3: Training** - The number of school staff completing the VAWDASV Group 1 online training during the Spring term remains at 73%. Attendance at termly meeting for Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) in schools has also remained stable, with attendance during the Spring term of 64%. Whilst recorded completion of the online safeguarding module is low, all schools are compliant with 'in-person' delivery of their whole school safeguarding training.
- 6.1.35 **Section 05 Fig 5.121.1 /2** - There are established arrangements in place for the reporting of bullying within schools. Due to ASOS data for the Spring term 2023 is not available for inclusion as not all schools have returned their data.
- 6.1.36 **Section 05 Figure 5.2.1/5.2.2/5.2.3: Electively Home Educated Pupils** - Annual visits by LA Officers to EHE pupils provide valuable information regarding the efficiency of the education provided. Support is offered to reintegrate or to signpost. Home visits are offered to parents who refuse are few. Neutral venues are offered, and School Attendance Orders are considered. Additional funding from WG has improved engagement with hard-to-reach families. There is emerging positive impact of this work but more needs to be done nationally so that a national register is compiled of all those children EHE. The implementation of effective safeguarding nationally continues to be compromised until this is achieved.
- 6.1.37 **Section 05 Figure 5.4.1/5.4.2/5.4.3/5.4.4/5.4.5: Children who offend** - There is a service level agreement in place with the Youth Offending Service and both agencies work together to ensure that children are in appropriate education. Figures demonstrate that there tends to be a dip in the autumn term. Outcome 22 is a new police outcome code that can be used when the police have decided to defer prosecution until the accused has been given the opportunity to engage with an intervention activity.
- 6.1.38 **Section 05 Figure 5.5.1: Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)** - There has been a drop in the number of incidents. The number of cases may differ as in addition to issuing Strike Warning Letters, the Police consider a range of options as a preventative measure. These include words of advice and home visits.
- 6.1.39 **Figure 5.8.5 Operation Encompass**  
The number of Operation Encompass notifications has reduced since the Autumn Term 2022, though it should be noted that the Spring term is shorter

than the Autumn term. When compared with the two previous Spring terms, the number of occurrences and number of children involved have reduced for each Spring term since 2021. Data available since Autumn 2022 is the % children present at incident; during the Spring term, children were present at 31.6% of occurrences, a slight decrease from 37.5% in the Autumn term.

6.1.40 **Section 05 Figure 5.10.1/5.10.2: Exclusions -**

Exclusions are high, with many schools seeing a decline in the behaviour of pupils. There is a similar picture across Wales. Targeted support meetings have been offered to schools to discuss attendance and behaviour. Training has been offered to governors. A vulnerable learner panel has been established where schools can discuss pupils with persistent disruptive behaviour. This remains a key priority for the Education Directorate and schools.

6.1.41 **Section 05 Figure 5.11.2: Physical Interventions -** The number of incidents increased during the Autumn term, reducing again in the Spring term. Spring term data is now aligned to the level of interventions seen during the pre-pandemic period. Most of the interventions are attributable to the specialist schools. Since the Autumn term, there has been a reduction in the number of interventions used in both specialist schools.

6.1.42 **Section 05 Figure 5.12/5.13/5.14 – Prejudice Related Incidents/Bullying -** There are established arrangements in place for the reporting of bullying concerns within schools which involve an alleged incident involving a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act. Due to ASOS the data for the Spring term 2023 is not available for inclusion.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

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

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

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

6.3.1 The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental Safeguarding Leads meetings reconvened in 2021, this helps 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.

6.3.2 Termly meetings also take place with the Safeguarding Leads from all the schools and other education settings and half termly meetings take place between the safeguarding team and lead education staff.

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

6.3.4 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 Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF) enables both Social Services and the Education Directorates 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. This process is further supplemented by the Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework within which local government education services operate.

The rigours self-evaluation processes ensure that key areas for development are identified and then embedded within business planning arrangements.

#### 6.5 **Preventative focus**

6.5.1 The work undertaken by the Social Services and Education Directorates 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.

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

6.5.3 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.

6.5.4 The recent establishment of the Strategic Safer Schools Partnership Board continues to progress strategic issues across the Local Government Education Services.

#### 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

6.6.1 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.

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

6.6.3 Throughout the quarters, partnership working with the police and statutory partners continued to progress. The Hub model is working well, with multi agency safeguarding meetings happening in a timely manner.

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

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

6.7.2 The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental safeguarding leads meetings helps ensure all departments within the Authority are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and are kept updated with any issues trends within safeguarding. Within Education this is further supplemented by the work of the Strategic Safer Schools Partnership Board and the termly meetings with Designated Safeguarding persons (DSP'S)

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

N/A

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment - EqIA** (*screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed*).

## 7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Local Safeguarding Network Group is a subgroup 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 monitor 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.

7.2 The performance of safeguarding information is monitored throughout the financial year from April to March and reported to People Scrutiny Committee and, in the context of Education, is supplemented by various quality assurance activities that are routinely reported to Education DLT on a termly basis and seek to inform the ongoing self-evaluation and the priorities to be progressed in respect of Safeguarding in Education.

7.3 The Strategic Corporate Safeguarding Leads Group has responsibility for implementing the recommendations from Audit Wales as well as ensuring that safeguarding responsibilities remain a role for all service areas.

### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

*Appendix 1 – BG Safeguarding Reporting Data Template Quarter 4 2023 Final*

*Appendix 2 – BG Education Risk Register*

*Appendix 3 - LGES Safeguarding Policy for 2023/24*

The following hyperlink provides further details on the governance and Structure: [www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk](http://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk)