

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND
SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(SAFEGUARDING) – 15TH JULY, 2019**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: M. Cook
G. A. Davies
P. Edwards
L. Elias
K. Hayden
J. Millard
J. C. Morgan
K. Pritchard
T. Smith

Co-Opted Member

A. Williams

WITH: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Education Transformation
Head of Adults Services
Service Manager, Children's Services
Safeguarding in Education Manager – Children Services
Adults Safeguarding Manager
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer – Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Holt, C. Meredith, G. Paulsen, S. Thomas and B. Summers.</p> <p>Co-opted Member – T. Baxter</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interests or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) Meeting held on 28th January, 2019.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) which was presented for Members approval of the Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Forward Work Programme for 2019/20.</p> <p>The Chair spoke to the report and informed Members that the Forward Work Programme was a fluid document and items could be added if necessary.</p> <p>Members requested that the following items be considered for the FWP:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusions in schools and linking in with CAMHS • Healthy eating in schools 	

- A Member briefing session be arranged on Operation Encompass.

The Head of Education Transformation advised Members that in relation to exclusions in schools, it was agreed that commentary would continue to be included in future Education and Social Services Safeguarding Performance reports. A Healthy Schools monitoring report that covers the healthy eating agenda in schools would be presented to a future Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and could be included as an information item for the Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee. A dedicated briefing session on Operation Encompass would be arranged.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 the Forward Work Programme 2019/20 for the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) be approved.

No. 6 SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2018

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services and Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with safeguarding performance information and analysis from across the Local Authority.

Social Services

The Service Manager, Children’s Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained in the Social Services information. The Officer reported an amendment to the period of safeguarding information from the Social Services Directorate. The period referred to in the report should read 1st April 2018 – 30th September 2019.

In response to a Member’s question regarding timescales for initial child protection conferences, the Service Manager, Children’s Services clarified the timescales to

hold initial child protection conferences. A statutory discussion meeting would be held within 24 hours of the referral, with 42 days to complete the assessment. Once the outcome of enquiries was determined then an initial child protection conference must be held within 15 days. Information regarding timescales for holding child protection conferences would be included in future performance reporting.

Service
Manager,
Children's
Services

Referrals to Social Services

A Member enquired what groups were included in the category 'Other Agency'. The Service Manager, Children's Services clarified that 151 referrals had been made by 'Other Agency' which included the voluntary sector, libraries, youth provision and other varied sources in the community.

The number of referrals from social landlords was low, a mandatory Corporate Policy was in place for housing colleagues, however, refresher training was needed on the categories of abuse to upskill landlords knowledge. Referrals could be made by telephone to the Duty Team.

In relation to the thresholds for intervention, the Service Manager, Children's Services said that the numbers of referrals from the start of the year to the end of year had reduced by 210. This evidenced the confidence in the threshold applied to referrals and the levels of intervention provided.

A Member enquired regarding the impact on the budget for independent foster carers. The Service Manager, Children's Services said that it was more expensive for the Authority to use independent foster carers and external placements. It was hoped that costly external placements could be re-established back to in-house provision to reduce cost pressures. The Director of Social Services commented that 2/3rd of Children Looked After were placed with in-house foster carers and the numbers of Children Looked After had reduced by 22 over the last 12 months.

Blaenau Gwent had a small pool of foster carers and a raft of recruitment campaigns had been undertaken to

increase the number of foster carers, i.e. radio broadcasts, leaflet drops and word of mouth. A Member felt that it would be beneficial to hold awareness raising events at supermarkets and street markets to help recruit new foster carers. The Service Manager, Children's Services said that this suggestion would be passed onto the respective team.

Education Information

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

Operation Encompass

A Member enquired regarding Operation Encompass. The Service Manager, Children's Services explained that this was a new police initiative its purpose was to address limitations in the early sharing of information between police and schools. It aimed to ensure that appropriate school staff are made aware of any domestic abuse incidents a young person may have witnessed at the earliest possible stage to offer relevant and tailored support.

Exclusions

A Member referred to exclusions and those pupils who move between schools and requested information on the reasons for such transfers. The Head of Education Transformation said transfer information was produced as part of the Admissions report. This information could be prepared, which would include information on the reasons why pupils transferred between schools for Members information.

The Chair commented on the readability of the performance data graphs as they were not printed in colour.

Elective Home Education

In response to a Member's query regarding curriculum changes and the number of Elective Home Educated

Head of
Education
Transformation

(EHE) pupils, the Corporate Director of Social Services said that it was difficult to predict if future numbers would increase. Safeguarding for home educated pupils was challenging as only one home visit per year was allowed by current national legislation. A letter requesting a review of the current policy had been forwarded to the Welsh Government but no announcement to revise the policy had yet been made.

In relation to the number of referrals per child, the Service Manager, Children's Services said that there was no set number but the IAA would look at the history and circumstances around the referral. The IAA could now provide feedback to the referrer. It was noted that the referrer could appeal against the decision.

Persistent Absenteeism

In relation to Persistent Absenteeism the Safeguarding in Education Manager said that the number of Persistent Absenteeism remained higher than last year except for pupils in yearly years, however, the numbers of Persistent Absenteeism in all phases had decreased since February 2019. The statistical information gathered included authorised and unauthorised absences including illness, medical appointments, exclusions and holidays taken during term time. Members felt that medical appointments and bereavements should be classified as authorised.

A Member enquired if there was a link to fines and children moving between schools to avoid fines for poor attendance and enquired if this would affect Key Stage 4 figures. The Head of Education Transformation said that the transfer of pupils at KS4 was monitored closely, particularly to minimise any impact on learner examination preparations.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the information provided and comments to improve the current monitoring processes be made.

No. 7

ADULTS ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2018-19

Consideration was given to the report of the Adults Service Manager for Development, Commissioning and Safeguarding and Sarah Jones, Adults Safeguarding Manager which was presented to provide Members with the Safeguarding Performance information relating to Adults Services from 1st April 2018 to the 31st March 2019.

The Service Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

In response to a Member’s question regarding the sources of referrals and the number of criminal prosecutions, the Head of Adult Services said that referrals were received from a variety of sources including a low number from the Leisure Trust, but the majority of referrals were submitted from commissioned and in-house provider agencies with referrals made by staff working with the local Authority noted as the second highest source of referrer. With regard to the number of prosecutions, the Officer would undertake to check how many of the 6 criminal investigations had led to a prosecution and report back to the Scrutiny Committee in due course. This information would also be included in future Adult Performance reports.

Head of Adult Services

In relation to referrals under the financial abuse category, it was confirmed that the Local Safeguarding Team work in collaboration with the Police and Trading Standards when investigating concerns reported. With regard to digital ‘scams’, the Safeguarding Lead confirmed that mechanisms were in place to ensure vulnerable people had access to digital inclusion support.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the information contained within the Adults Annual Safeguarding Report 2018/19 was considered and noted and the report be presented for consideration at Executive and Council.

No. 8	<p><u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE SAFEGUARDING POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the Education Directorate Safeguarding Policy following its annual review.</p> <p>The Safeguarding in Education Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed; namely to accept the draft policy as presented in Appendix 1.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the commencement times of future Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) Meetings.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) meetings be held on a Monday at 10.00 a.m.</p>	