

Committee: **Joint Social Services & Education and Learning (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **23rd March 2020**

Report Subject: **Safeguarding Performance Information for Social Services and Education – 1st July to 31st December 2019**

Portfolio Holder: **CIlr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services; and
 CIlr Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**

Report Submitted by: **Alison Ramshaw, Service Manager, Children’s Services; and
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Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
20.02.20	06.03.20	09.03.20			23.03.20	22.04.20		

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 July 2019 to the 31st December 2019. 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 July 2019 – 31st December 2019, and Education information from 1st July – 31st December 2019

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.

2.3 In response to the follow up review of the corporate arrangements for safeguarding by Wales Audit Office (WAO) which was presented to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on the 12th February 2020 a working group has

been set up and action plan developed to address the recommendations required. A further update will be provided at the next meeting

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Having scrutinised the information members can

Option1

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)***

Quarters 2 & 3 have seen the number of children on the child protection register vary from 61 in Quarter 2 and 71 in Quarter 3. The numbers of children looked after has remained stable and the numbers of court applications continues to be stable which is having a positive impact on the budget

The safeguarding team is experiencing some staffing challenges with a full time Independent Reviewing Officer on long term sick leave. This has resulted in the service needing to source support from the independent sector which will come at a cost. The full extent of this cost implication will be known and reported on in Quarter 4's report.

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 Quarter 2 (1,192) with a slight dip then in Quarter 3 (1,031). The drop in referrals may be an indication that the work currently being undertaken with partner agencies regarding thresholds /assessments of risk and the availability of preventative services is having a positive impact on Children's Services.

Figure 1.2: Shows the source of the referrals as previous quarters, police remain the highest referring agency (33.5% in Quarter 2 & 29.9% in Quarter 3) followed by Health (14.3%) and then closely followed by Education (11.8%)

Figure 1.3: shows the numbers of referrals received into the department on open cases. During Quarter 2 the number increased to 1,029 from 806 in Quarter 1 this number increased again slightly in Quarter 3 to 1.036.

The rise in additional referrals on open cases was analysed and it would appear that referrals for those cases open to the 14+ team were high in both quarters. Further analysis evidenced that of these numbers a high percentage of children were being managed under the exploitation risk management processes. This would account for the high percentage of referrals for this cohort of children.

For those children aged 0-13 years the numbers of additional referrals on open cases are on average similar to previous quarters.

6.2.2 **Youth Services**

Figure 1.4: Shows the numbers of youth service referrals during Quarters 2 and 3. The figure shows that a continued rise in referrals from 17 in Quarter 2 to 18 in Quarter 3.

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 61 children on the child protection register in Quarter 2 to 32 families. This accounted for an additional 17 children being registered in

this quarter. The numbers of children on the child protection register decreased by 9 in Quarter 2.

Quarter 3 saw a slight rise in registrations with 71 children on the child protection register to 35 families, which was an increase of 10 from the previous quarter. 34 children were placed on the register during Quarter 3. The numbers indicate an overall trend as the numbers in previous quarters demonstrates similar numbers (see below):

- 56 in Quarter 4 (2018/19)
- 70 in Quarter 1 (2019/20)
- 61 in Quarter 2 (2019/20)
- 71 in Quarter 3 (2019/20)

Figure 2.5: shows the average time a child is on the Child Protection Register. The Social Services Senior Management Team review all those children on the Child Protection Register for 12 months or longer to ensure there is no unnecessary drift. It is pleasing to see that over the last 2 quarters these numbers continue to reduce.

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 decreased during Quarter 2 to 14 children to 8 families. All 14 children subject to a child protection case conference were registered.

56 review conferences were held in Quarter 2, 32 children continued registration with 24 children who ceased to be registered.

The numbers of initial conferences held in Quarter 3 increased to 39 children to 17 families. Of the 39 children subject to child protection case conference 32 were registered.

43 review conferences were held in Quarter 3, 19 children continued registration with 24 who ceased to be registered.

Figure 2.7: shows the number of initial conferences held within timescales. There has been consistency practice in this area throughout the 2 reporting period, with 100% of conferences held within timescales.

Figure 2.8: relates to review conferences and the graph shows 100% performance which is excellent.

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 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).

6.3.2 **Bullying Incidents and Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI)**

There have been processes developed between Education and the Youth Offending Service to tackle anti-social behaviour in schools and a draft policy is in the process of being adopted to look at parenting contracts with parents. This is on the Forward Work Programme of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. In addition, the current RPI policy is under review and will be finalised in the summer term.

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.

The number of RPIs in the Autumn term was 55. This is a decrease from the same period last year.

The 55 interventions are for 21 different children. A small number of these children experienced more than 2 RPIs.

Regular 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 and work based on the new Welsh Government guidance is also in train.

In the period 1st September to – 31st December 2019 (*Figure 4.2*) there were no exclusions from schools where bullying was recorded as the primary reason for the exclusion, or indeed as an additional reason.

It should be noted that caution is needed when considering fluctuations in such small numbers and drawing trend conclusions.

6.3.5 **Quality Assurance Visits**

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” is undertaken by the Safeguarding in Education Manager to test the robustness of the safeguarding systems and to ascertain a level of assurance.

Over a two-year time period, this process has been applied to Schools, Early Years settings, the Youth Service, Leisure Trust, Home to School Transport, Catering and Organisational Development and has now been extended to cover independent school settings and after school clubs.

During the Summer term 2019 an audit of safeguarding arrangements in Blaenau Gwent Breakfast clubs took place. Information for this audit was gathered through discussion, observation, questionnaires and with reference to Welsh Government statutory guidance document no 145/2014, ‘Free Breakfast in Primary Schools’. The findings of the audit confirm that all staff in Breakfast clubs receive safeguarding training and know how to report their concerns as well as other areas where learning has been identified. Therefore, a full report on this subject matter is included in the forward work programme for this Committee and will be presented to the next Committee meeting at the end of the summer term.

During the Autumn Term, 100% (6) of the possible quality assurance visits have taken place. This has included maintained schools, independent special schools and early years. There have been no significant safeguarding issues identified during these visits which have provided reassurance that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place in schools and other education services.

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 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 pupils 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 December 2019. During the period there was 1 Estyn inspection reported.

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 156 occurrences involving 247 children. When further analysed it is noted that the majority of the children (152 61%) affected are of primary school age.

Unfortunately, on this occasion the data regarding the number of repeat incidents on children is not available.

However, of the children affected during the period:

- 8 cases were high risk
- 56 cases were medium risk
- 183 cases were standard 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.

6.3.8 **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 remains below target at 64.8% and has also fallen from the previous period. 70.7%

During this period a member briefing session was held on this important initiative.

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.

Figure 4.6: The total number of children electively home educated as of 31st December 2019 was 77. At the same point in 2018 the number was 76.

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 Spring, Summer and Autumn term. This is a decrease of 14 pupils coming out of school when compared to the data for the previous two years.

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. This is an increase of 2 pupils coming out of school when compared to the data for last year.

Figure 4.9: provides a breakdown by year group of EHE pupils. The numbers of pupils in KS3 is the highest which is slightly different 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 a small increase the work carried out in the last academic year has ensured the rate of rise has been positively impacted.

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 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 South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board (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 Adult 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 Quarters 2 and 3 partnership working with the police continues to progress through the Early Action Together programme. 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 2019-2020 (Q2 and Q3)*