

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING) – 2ND DECEMBER, 2019

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: H. Trollope
M. Cook
G.A. Davies
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
J. Millard
J.C. Morgan
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Summers

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Education Transformation
Service Manager for Development & Commissioning
Service Manager, Children's Services (Safeguarding)
Safeguarding in Education 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.	

No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Bevan, L. Elias, C. Meredith, A. Moore, G. Paulsen and T. Sharrem.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING)</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) Meeting held on 15th July, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 15TH JULY, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) held on 15th July, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Item 6 – Safeguarding Performance Information for Social Services and Education</u></p> <p>A Member suggested that to capture the information regarding in year transfers graphs be included with the data. The Education Transformation Manager said that regarding out of county pupils no detailed information was available, although the Department did try to pursue this information with schools and other local authorities.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	

<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>EXECUTIVE DECISION SHEET FOR THE JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Executive Decision Sheet.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Executive Decision Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager, Children’s Services and the Strategic Education Improvement Manager, which was presented to provide Members with safeguarding performance information from the Council with a focus on analysis from Children’s Social Services and Education from 1st April to the 30th June, 2019.</p> <p>The Service Manager, Children’s Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p><u>Impact on Budget</u></p> <p>With reference to court applications and legal costs, the Service Manager said that the number of court applications was stable and the Safeguarding Team were now working at full capacity and both had a positive impact on the budget, although it was sometimes necessary to commission an external consultant for Court appearances. The Director of Social Services commented that market testing had been undertaken and work was ongoing to see if other local authorities could provide Blaenau Gwent with this service.</p> <p>A Member requested that for future reporting graphs be located near to the relevant text for clarification. The Service Manager said that the format of the report would be looked at for clarification purposes.</p> <p><u>Social Services</u></p> <p>A Member enquired if the police were the highest source of referrals. The Service Manager said that the Detective</p>	

Sergeant (DS) role in the Information Advice and Assistance service (IAA) was making positive contributions to the safeguarding process. Referrals from police had not reduced but the quality of information received had improved which resulted in better decision making through preventative services such as the Early Action Together programme. The Member also enquired regarding Leisure Trust referrals. The Service Manager confirmed that all staff were trained in level 1 safeguarding to recognise signs of abuse and some referrals from police may have originated from Leisure Trust staff. The Head of Education Transformation commented that the Leisure Trust had lead officers for safeguarding but referrals may be low as most leisure provision was open access and assured Members that arrangements were secure.

Categories of abuse

In response to a Member's question regarding the main category of abuse, the Service Manager said that the main category was neglect, this was the highest form due to reasons such as parenting, home or being exposed to vulnerabilities re poverty lack of finances. The second highest was emotional abuse, mental health abuse would present as emotional abuse so the secondary category would go hand in hand. Although challenging preventative measures were used through partnership working, education and informing parents of the impact of emotional abuse on the child.

A Member pointed out an error on page 37, Fig 2.4 Breakdown of children on child protection register, the information relating to Unknown should read Male.

Councillors Martin Cook and Wayne Hodgins left the meeting at this juncture.

Education Information

The Safeguarding in Education Manager presented the Education information.

A Member enquired regarding the high number of restrictive physical interventions during the Autumn term. The Head of Education Transformation explained the Autumn term

generally was the longest term; however, the trend was consistent with previous reporting information. The Directorate was looking at trends and would provide commentary to support the data presented within future reports.

A Member commented that Members needed to be confident that physical intervention incidents were being reduced and that it was important that performance data be submitted in a timely manner for Members consideration of up to date information.

The Safeguarding in Education Manager assured Members that they could be confident that the performance data was correct and that work was being undertaken to try to reduce restrictive physical interventions.

In relation to Elected Home Educated (EHE) pupils, the Head of Education Transformation said that lengthy Scrutiny discussions had taken place and the Council was working in line with Welsh Government requirements.

With reference to Operation Encompass a Member enquired if referrals passed onto schools was actioned. The Safeguarding in Education Manager said that Operation Encompass allowed schools to be aware that an incident had occurred and respond appropriately to that pupil's situation. Feedback from teachers had been positive, they found the information helpful in raising their awareness and understanding of pupils circumstances.

In response to a Member's question regarding trends for September 2018 to September 2019 for Elected Home Educated pupils (EHE), the Head of Education Transformation said that the Education Service would be aware of the reasons parents choose to home educate with many parents deciding on this approach at the start of the academic year. Six secondary age pupils had become EHE in April to July 2019, the Education Welfare Service would have reviewed the reasons why the pupils had been removed.

A Member enquired how many pupils were EHE as at December 2019. The Head of Education Transformation

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	<p>said that as the figure changed regularly he would forward this information onto Members directly.</p> <p>A Member commented that home visits for EHE pupils were currently once a year and enquired what progress the Directorate had been made regarding this issue. The Director of Social Services said that current Welsh Government regulations stated once a year home visits. A letter had been sent to the Welsh Government with a view to strengthen safeguarding in EHE pupils from all the regional Directors of Education and Directors of Social Services and there was a consultation on a new proposal, he hoped that the number of home visits would change in future and he would take Members views forward. It was noted that Social Workers would undertake visits if there were safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the approach and information detailed in the report be accepted.</p>	tion
No. 8	<p><u>ADULT SAFEGUARDING REPORT – 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Adult Services which was presented to provide Members with safeguarding performance information relating to Adult Services from 1st April to the 30th June, 2019.</p> <p>The Service Manager for Development & Commissioning spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF), the Director of Social Services said that funding had been secured up to March 2021 and discussions were underway for securing funding beyond this point but there were no guarantees.</p> <p>A Member referred to domestic abuse cases for this quarter and enquired if they were the same or different issues reported in the last quarter. The Service Manager said that some issues were similar, however, it was difficult to report as some issues overlapped. The majority of cases were internal and timelines had been strengthened, for example</p>	

where a theft had occurred and the police were involved if no evidence could be found this would then become an internal issue.

A Member enquired if there had been any prosecutions. The Service Manager said that one individual at risk was being managed and presented to the police. If there were allegations against a carer the Agency would need to suspend that carer and replace with another.

A Member referred to the high number of unknowns on the person alleged responsible table. The Service Manager explained that this was due to no specific individual being identified, for example a neighbour may have reported a fall by a service user or a carer may be concerned about a family member taking money. There would be a screening process to gather evidence and map and monitor effectively, but no proof may have been found.

Another Member referred to the sources of referrals. The Service Manager explained that there could be several referrals from different sources regarding the same individual, this would be classed as one referral so no duplication would take place.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that the report be accepted as provided and recommend approval at the Executive Committee.

No. 9

QUALITY ASSURING SAFEGUARDING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES (LGES)

Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which was presented to seek Members views on the revised quality assurance protocol for safeguarding arrangements in Local Government Education Services (LGES).

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

A Member raised concerns regarding transfers of pupils from one school to another and out of county transfers and commented that it was incumbent on the school to pass on

transfer information and felt that the Admission Policy was not being implemented by schools correctly i.e. completing the transfer forms fully. The Head of Education Transformation said that the Admission Policy was renewed annually and was presented to Education & Learning Scrutiny Members for consideration, however, he would work to ensure that implementation of the policy would be carried out more effectively. Members acknowledged this course of action.

Another Member also raised concerns in relation to transfer information not being passed onto schools. He commented that staff and pupils could be at risk of violence and aggression if information was not passed on. He also enquired what support was in place for school staff who had allegations made against them. The Head of Education Transformation said that a task and finish group led by the Chief Officer Commercial to discuss violence and aggression against staff was to be arranged and one key point for discussion would be school-based staff.

A Member commented that a policy should be considered that if a parent was banned from one school they should be banned from all schools in the borough due to safeguarding issues.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that Members scrutinised the revised protocol and contributed to the continuous assessment of effectiveness.