

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

Date of meeting: **8th October 2020**

Report Subject: **Safeguarding Performance Information for Social Services – 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director of Social Services**
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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)
22.09.20	24.09.20	24.09.20			08.10.20	14.10.20		

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 from 1st April 2019 to the 31st March 2020. 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.
- 1.2 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 2019 – 31st March 2020 (Q’s 1, 2, 3 & 4)
- 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.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that a separate briefing note has been provided to this committee in respect of the educational element of this report in relation to the period January to March 2020 in the light of the pandemic

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The Safeguarding Performance Information has been approved by CLT at their meeting on 24th September 2020.

Having scrutinised the information members can:

3.2 **Option1**

Accept the approach and information detailed in the report provided

3.3 **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**

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

- Corporate Plan
- Well-Being Plan
- Corporate Risk Register
- Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy
- Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy

4.2 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)***

Q's 1, 2, 3 & 4 has seen the number of children on the child protection register vary from 61 at the lowest and 72 being the highest. The numbers of children looked after remained stable with the overall trend showing a decrease in numbers. This along with the lower numbers of court applications continuing a positive impact on the budget

The safeguarding team experienced some staffing challenges in the first 3 quarters of the reporting period however this has since changed with the safeguarding team operating at full capacity, which has negated the need to seek staffing support from the independent sector.

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) Social Services**

6.1.1 **Referrals to Social Services**

6.1.2 **Figure 1:1** Shows the number of referrals made to social services within the four reporting quarters. The chart demonstrates a slight increase in referrals during Q2 (1,192) with a slight dip then in Q3 (1,031) with a second slight rise in Q4 (1189). The overall data evidences consistency in referral rates and despite Q's 2 & 4 showing an increase this increase is not significant enough to raise safeguarding concerns.

6.1.3 **Figure 1.2:** Shows the source of the referrals, again the data provides a consistent picture in that police remain the highest referring agency (1,434 for all four quarters) followed by Education (771) and then closely followed by Health (626)

6.1.4 **Figure 1.3:** shows the numbers of referrals received into the department on open cases. During Q2 the number increased to 1,029 from 806 in Q1 this number increased again slightly in Q3 to 1,036. In Q4 this had risen to 1888. 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 all four quarters. Further analysis evidenced that of these numbers a high percentage of children were being managed under the exploitation risk management processes and the 115 (contextualised safeguarding) meeting. 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.

It is noteworthy to mention that whilst the numbers of referrals on open case can appear high, duplication and for information only MARF's are also captured under a re referral

6.1.5 **Youth Services**

Figure 1.4: Shows the numbers of youth service referrals during this reporting period and the data shows a fluctuation in the numbers of referral throughout the year. Whilst the numbers of referrals are low, I can confirm that those young people attending youth service provision also attend an education provision and the likelihood is that their needs are picked up through education referrals. Young people are also referred into the preventative

service provisions where needs are assessed and met in accordance with that assessed need.

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.

6.1.6 **Child Protection**

6.1.7 **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 Q2 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 Q2.

Q3 saw a slight rise in registrations with 72 children on the child protection register to 35 families. During Q4 the numbers of children on the child protection register decreased to 61 The numbers throughout the four quarters indicates an overall trend as the numbers in previous quarters demonstrates similar numbers

70 in Q1 (2019)

61 in Q2 (2019)

72 in Q3 (2019)

61 in Q4 (2020)

6.1.8 **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. It is pleasing to see that over the last 4 quarters these numbers continue to reduce, with no children being recorded as being on the child protection register for more than 24 months. Significant reduction in time spent on the child protection register for periods of 6 – 12 months and 12 – 24 months can also be see in Q4

6.1.9 **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 remained consistent averaging between 25/39 throughout this reporting period. (108 in total)

201 review conferences were held in the four Q's with 96 continued registrations and 105 reaching an outcome of deregistration

Of the numbers of initial conferences held throughout the four reporting quarters 94 children were registered 11 were not and 3 registrations were agreed pre-birth.

6.1.10 **Figure 2.7:** shows the number of initial conferences held within timescales. There has been consistency practice in this area throughout Q's 1, 2, & 3 (100%) with a dip Q4 showing at 86%

6.1.11 **Figure 2.8:** relates to review conferences and the graph shows excellent performance with just slight dips in the 100% target.

- **Q1 – 100%**
- **Q2 – 91%**
- **Q3 – 100%**
- **Q4 – 98.5%**

6.2 **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.

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

6.3.1 The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental Safeguarding Leads help 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 monthly 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.

6.4 **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.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

6.5.1 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.

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.

6.6 **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.

6.6.1 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.

6.6.2 Throughout the four Q's 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.

6.6.3 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.

6.7 **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.

6.8 **EqlA**
N/A

7. **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 (Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4)*