

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

Date of meeting: **26th April 2020**

Report Subject: **Safeguarding Performance Information for Social Services and Education – 1st April to 31st December 2020**

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

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director 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)
	15.04.21	20.04.21			26.04.21			

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 April 2020 to the 31st December 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.

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 2020 – 31st December 2020, and Education information from 1st April – 31st December 2020

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.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Having scrutinised the information Members can:

Option 1

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 Improvement 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)***

There is no impact on the budget. Children's Services are making good progress in relation to those Children Looked After in residential care placements returning into care environments that fully supports their care plans and is less costly. Progress is also being made on revoking care orders for children placed at home under the auspices of Placement with Parent Regulations.

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 Q1 (1,113) with an increase in Q2 (1,292) and Q3 (1,363). Indications are that the increase during Q3 is as a result of the easing of the COVID 19 restrictions and the reopening of schools.

Figure 1.2: Shows the source of the referrals. As previous quarters, police remain the highest referring agency (40% in Q1, 39% in Q2 & 35% in Q3) followed by Health (16%) and then closely followed by Other Agencies (12%)

Figure 1.3: shows the numbers of referrals received into the department on open cases. During Q2 the number increased to 824 from 817 in Q1 this number increased again in Q3 to 981.

During the COVID 19 pandemic children's social services Red, Amber, Green(RAG) rated their open cases to ensure those children most at risk continued to get a service that safeguarded and promoted their welfare. Following the easing of restrictions those cases identified as less concerning were revisited and services were offered in line with the assessed need. Families and partner agencies were encouraged to re-refer into the department, this may explain the rise in numbers during the quarters covered in this report.

6.2.2 **Youth Services**

Figure 1.4: Shows the numbers of Youth Services referrals during Q's 1, 2 and 3. The figure shows that a reduction in referrals 15 in Q1 to 7 in Q3

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(CPR) the numbers of registrations and deregistration is also included. There were a total of 62 children on the child protection register in Q1 to 33 families. This accounted for an additional 1 child being registered in this quarter. The numbers of children on the child protection register increased by 14 to 76 in Q2 involving 39 families.

Q3 saw 68 children on the child protection register to 33 families, which was an increase of 8 from the previous quarter. 23 children were placed on the register during Q3. (see below)

61 in Q4 (2020)
62 in Q1 (2020)
76 in Q2 (2020)
68 in Q3 (2020)

Whilst there is no right or wrong number when analysing the numbers of children placed on the child protection register. The numbers throughout the four quarters are fairly consistent and give no cause for concern. Monthly monitoring of the child protection register takes place at a senior management level. The Safeguarding Manager provides updated reports to the senior management group and these reports provide detailed information that ensures the meetings give appropriate oversight and analysis of the registrations and the child protection care planning arrangements as necessary.

Figure 2.5: shows the average time a child is on the CPR. As mentioned above, 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. There are no cases that give cause for concern.

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 increased in Q1 to 33 children to 19 families. Of the 33 children subject to child protection case conference 32 were registered.

51 review conferences were held in Q1, 23 children continued registration with 28 children who ceased to be registered.

The numbers of initial conferences held in Q2 decreased to 30 children to 16 families. Of the 30 children subject to child protection case conference 29 were registered.

45 review conferences were held in Q3 and 27 children continued registration with 18 who ceased to be registered.

The numbers of initial conferences held in Q3 decreased to 28 children to 12 families. Of the 28 children subject to child protection case conference 27 were registered.

53 review conferences were held in Q3. 26 children continued registration with 27 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 3 reporting period, with 100% of conferences held within timescales.

Figure 2.8: shows the number of review conferences held within timescales. There was a slight dip in performance during Q2 and a slightly smaller dip again during Q3.

Of the review conferences that were held outside of timescales there have been reasonable explanations given. These include: -

- Initial dates being rearranged due to the social worker needing to take time off work due to a bereavement
- A rearranged conference did not go ahead as the mother could not access the social worker's report
- Neither the chair nor business support were not informed by a social worker that the child had been born. The child had been born prematurely and was placed with maternal grandparents upon discharge from hospital due to the risks in relation to both parents. No safeguarding concerns were noted though as an Interim Care Order was granted by the Court shortly following the birth.

6.3 **Education**

6.3.1 Members will be aware that a briefing report was submitted to the last Scrutiny meeting regarding the difficulties in gathering the data from schools as a result of the pandemic, which commenced in March 2020 and disrupted education provision through this time

6.3.2 Members will be aware that schools closed on 24th March 2020 and were repurposed to provide hub provision during the initial phase of the pandemic, with children being provided with an opportunity to check in and catch up for the last three weeks of what would have been the summer term prior to the whole school return commencing on a graduated basis from 1st September 2020.

6.3.3 Members will also be aware that throughout the autumn term education within the County Borough was disrupted with the many schools being affected at some point with classes, year groups and some schools being required to self-isolate during the autumn term as the virus continued to spread. Consequently, schools in Blaenau Gwent switched to remote learning on 10th December 2020 in the interest of the wellbeing of pupils and their families and in recognition that the coronavirus cases in the County Borough remained amongst the highest in Wales. Schools partially reopened on 22nd February 2021 with face to face learning commencing for some pupils with all pupils returning to school on 12th April 2021. During this time schools were again repurposed to provide hub provision.

6.3.4 Throughout this time both the local authority, school staff and partners have flexed and continued to respond to the new and emerging daily challenges that this virus has brought. Consequently, given the state of flux *it has been far from a 'business as usual' approach and as such Members will be aware from a previous briefing note to this committee that one of the business activities that has continued to be affected is the routine data collection of*

information from our schools and partners, which is used to inform performance reports such as this.

6.4 Clearly, as the situation now appears to be improving with the country cautiously being removed from lock down measures, the Safeguarding in Education Manager has written to schools at the start of the summer term reminding them of the need to start regularly reporting this information so that future reports can be considered by this committee so that usual data collection from April 2021 can commence. Appendix 2 details the communication that has been sent to schools. Furthermore, the Education Directorate team continue to work in collaboration with our schools to roll-out the Capita One MyConcern package and this will be an important tool used for data gathering and monitoring safeguarding considerations across the school estate. Members will be provided with an update on the implementation of MyConcern in future reports.

6.5 **Expected Outcome for the public**

That all children are safeguarded, and, where required are supported in reaching their full potentials

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

Safeguarding children is a statutory responsibility and is reliant upon a multi-agency response. Statutory partners attend safeguarding meetings as appropriate

6.7 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

Throughout the COVID pandemic safeguarding children has continued to take priority in service delivery. Whilst many meetings have needed to take place virtually, service delivery will continue to be monitored and reviewed, changes to current practice will follow WG guidance

6.8 **Preventative focus**

As part of the CLA Reduction Strategy, early intervention and prevention is an approach to practice that aims to identify issues early and provide packages of support designed to prevent needs escalating and requiring statutory intervention

6.9 **Collaboration / partnership working**

See 6.5

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

Appendix

