

SUBJECT: SAFEGUARDING EVALUATION REPORT April 2020 – March 2021

MEETING: COUNCIL 4th November 2021

DATE: DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is:

- To evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2020 / 2021, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2021 - 2022.
- To inform Members about the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire and the work that is in progress to support the Council's aims in protecting children and adults at risk from harm and abuse.
- To inform Members about the progress made towards meeting the standards in the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy approved by Council in July 2017, amended January 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 For members to receive and endorse the Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report and Activity Plan.

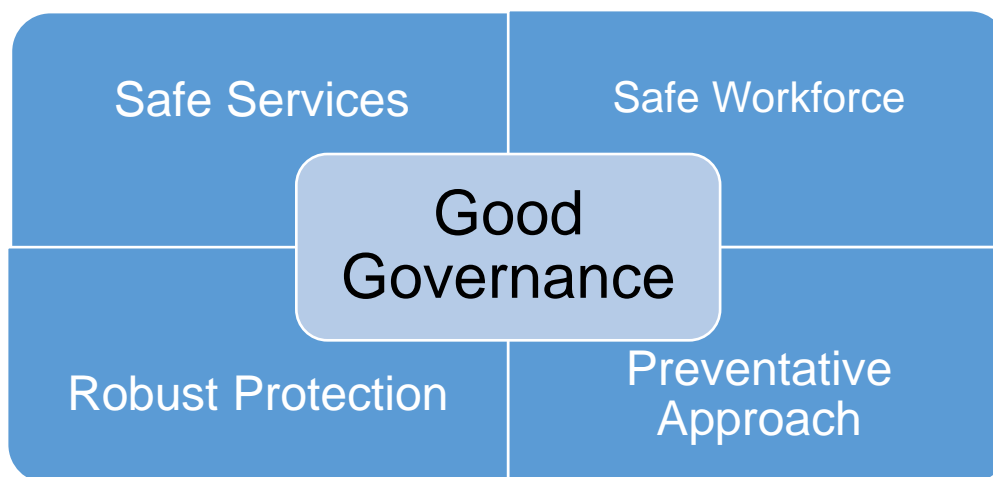
3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 This safeguarding evaluation (see appendix 2) is based on activity and information from April 2020 to March 2021. During the majority of this period COVID restrictions have been in place. This has obviously had an impact on operational safeguarding activity and where relevant, this is referenced within the evaluation and informs the current safeguarding risk assessment (appendix 5)
- 3.2 The report is developed within the context of the approved Monmouthshire County Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy which covers duties for both children and adults at risk in line with the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act (2014). The analysis within the report reflects progress against

priority areas set out within the policy and draws on data and information concerning both groups.

- 3.3 The 5 cornerstones of safeguarding within the Corporate Safeguarding Policy are set out below.

The Cornerstones of safeguarding in Monmouthshire



- 3.4 Embedding and sustaining the highest standards of safeguarding is a continuous endeavor. This evaluation report forms an integral part of the continual development of safeguarding practice across the Council and drives the work of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group. The evaluation report seeks to balance qualitative and quantitative data as well as drawing in other sources of information to support the evaluation. The evaluation report is at appendix 2.
- 3.5 Relevant sources of external information were used to inform this evaluation including:
- Welsh Audit Office *Follow-up review of Corporate Arrangements for Safeguarding of Children* (issued February 2020)
 - Estyn *Report on Education Services in MCC* (issued February 2020)
 - CIW Focused Activity Inspection Adult Safeguarding (February 2020)
 - CIW Focused Activity Inspection Children Safeguarding (February 2020)
 - CIW Assurance Check of Children and Adult Social Services (February 2021)
 - Internal Audit Report on Safeguarding Training issued March 2021

- 3.6 The self-assessment score has been agreed by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group through critical challenge on the basis of evidence reviewed to date. It uses the corporate scoring framework (Appendix 1) to provide an overall judgement of effectiveness between 1 (major weaknesses) and 6 (excellent / outstanding). The current self-assessment is set out below.

Self-assessment scores as at March 2021

<u>Cornerstone of Safeguarding</u>	<u>April 17 -Sept 17</u>	<u>Oct 17- March 18</u>	<u>April 2018 - March 2019</u>	<u>April 2019 - March 2020</u>	<u>April 2020 - March 2021</u>
Good Governance	4	5	5	5	5
Safe Workforce	3	4	3	3	4
Preventative Approach	3	4	4	4	5
Robust Protection	4	4	4	3	3
Safe Services	2	3	3	3	4

- 3.5 Priority improvement actions arising from the evaluation form the basis of the WASG action plan which is implemented and monitored through the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group (see appendix 3). The review of the previous year's action plan is at appendix 4.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Not applicable to this report

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each 'cornerstone' section of the report opens with descriptors of 'what good looks like'. These descriptors provide the basis of how we measure the standard over time using both qualitative and quantitative sources.

Safeguarding progress is reported on an annual basis to full Council.

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 This evaluation report is completed within the context of Monmouthshire County Council's background and history in respect of safeguarding as set out in brief

below and represents a further opportunity for Members to consider the distance travelled by the Local Authority in improving safeguarding practice.

- 6.2 Council Members will be aware that in November 2012 the Local Authority was found to have inadequate safeguarding arrangements in place. Shortcomings included a lack of safeguarding policy as well as operational weaknesses particularly within a schools based context.
- 6.3 The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit was established within Children's Services in 2012 quickly extending its role to supporting the Authority's improvement journey around children's safeguarding.
- 6.4 In February 2014 an Estyn monitoring visit recognised that the council had appropriately prioritised safeguarding and 'set the foundations well for recovery' particularly at service and practitioner. However, the authority still did not have 'effective enough management information systems and processes to enable it to receive appropriate and evaluative management information about safeguarding'. This criticism was echoed by a subsequent Welsh Audit Office review of safeguarding in March 2014.
- 6.5 In response to this the council established the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group (WASG) initially chaired by the Chief Executive with a focus specifically on children. The inaugural meeting took place in July 2014.
- 6.6 The Local Authority came out of Special Measures in November 2015 when strong progress in safeguarding was recognised.
- 6.7 A recommendation was subsequently made to Cabinet and endorsed in July 2016 allowing the work of the WASG to incorporate safeguarding for adults at risk so that good practice and learning could be mutually shared, and marking the statutory basis of adult safeguarding as a consequence of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 6.8 Members will also be aware that Wales Audit Office issued statutory recommendations in respect of safeguarding in respect of the Council's Kerbcraft service in January 2017. This was followed by a Wales Audit Office led inspection which took place in January 2018, in partnership with both CIW and Estyn. The report to this was issued in August 2018 and scrutinised by CYP Select in October 2018. There were 4 main proposals within the report including further strengthening of the policy framework; further steps to ensure a safe workforce and safeguarding within commissioning.
- 6.9 The WAO conducted a follow up 'light touch' inspection to this in September 2019. The written outcome was received 5th February 2020 with no further recommendations made.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no resource implications to this report.

8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

This report is critically concerned with the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire County Council.

9. CONSULTEES:

Whole Authority Safeguarding Group
Julie Boothroyd – Chief Officer

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Corporate Safeguarding Policy

11. AUTHOR:

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12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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Appendix 1

The Corporate Evaluation Framework

The evaluation score from 1-6	The evaluative context
Level 6 Excellent	Excellent or outstanding
Level 5 Very Good	Good Major strengths
Level 4 Good	Important strengths with some areas for improvement
Level 3 Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Level 2 Weak	Important weaknesses
Level 1 Unsatisfactory	Major weakness

APPENDIX 2
The Evaluation

1). Good Governance

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5

What does good look like?

In Monmouthshire County Council we ensure that safeguarding for children and adults at risk is understood as “everyone’s responsibility”. With strong leadership there is a continuous focus on embedding safeguarding culturally across all parts of the Council at a “hearts and minds” level. Safeguarding is supported by robust policies and operating procedures which are embedded within all settings and services. We work effectively with regional safeguarding boards to sure good alignment and maximise our resources.

Progress and Evidence

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy was reviewed and updated in Jan 2019 to include a clearer link to Data Protection issues and Whistleblowing.

The safeguarding policy framework within MCC was highlighted as positive within the Estyn inspection (Feb 2020).

A safeguarding position statement was issued as part of emergency arrangements for COVID. The risks to safeguarding during the pandemic were highlighted as a risk at corporate level and mitigating actions were put in place.

The Whole Authority Safeguarding Group was suspended briefly during emergency, but resumed July 2020.

In February 2021 CIW carried out an Assurance Check with a focus *on how well social services continue to support children and adults with a focus on safety and wellbeing*. This recognised that:

“At the outset of the pandemic, the local authority introduced a revised purpose and eight new strategic aims to provide clarity and ensure accountability through the period. This includes an aim to help vulnerable young people and adults who need support. Leaders have maintained a line of sight on the changing COVID-19 landscape resulting in clear plans to address the issues presented. This has led to creative and responsive practice.”

The safeguarding ‘self-assessment’ process is commenced every other year on a directorate basis via the Safeguarding Assessment Framework for Evaluation (SAFE). There was some disruption to the 2019 – 2021 process because of the pandemic. The next iteration of the SAFE (2021 – 2023) was launched in April 2021. As we did for the 2019 programme, we will adopt a similar ‘workshop’ check and challenge approach for directorates to share the outcomes of their SAFEs. This approach uses real case studies to demonstrate safeguarding in action and facilitates the sharing of good practice, collective problem solving and the identification of safeguarding issues / themes.

Additional resource has been provided to the Safeguarding Unit to enhance the business support capacity and positions have now been filled. This should allow for some strengthening of data and information management within the Unit to inform the function / role of the WASG.

Safeguarding is included within the timetable of Internal Audit, with specific areas of audit being discussed and agreed with the WASG. The most recent audit concerned safeguarding training and was undertaken in January – March 2020. The audit was issued in March 2021 and found Considerable Level of Assurance. The action plan arising has been implemented.

The Welsh Safeguarding Procedures came into force in April 2020. There was good awareness raising across the Council regarding the new procedures with the Safeguarding Procedures App being pinned to all Council laptops. Training has been made available for relevant employees. Procedures are being gradually updated through the auspices of the regional safeguarding boards. A new MARF / Duty to Report form is to be issued shortly and will need to be disseminated to all partner agencies.

Regional safeguarding boards have continued to operate during the pandemic at an executive level however, Monmouthshire continues to be represented and maintains good links into both the Gwent Wide Safeguarding Board and the VAWDASV board.

There is strong engagement in regional approaches to Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation meeting (MASE) Child Sex Exploitation (CSE), Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) and Contest (PREVENT anti radicalisation).

Analysis

The work of the WASG continues to be a major strength, which is reflected in our self-assessment score as 5.

Key Strengths:

- Policy framework including SAFEs
- Safeguarding response and risk assessment during COVID-19 pandemic
- Positive CIW assurance check
- Considerable level of assurance finding in Internal Audit of safeguarding training.

Next Steps

- Implement 2021 – 2023 SAFE process
- Evaluate learning and outcomes process and ensure this informs future planning
- Development / implementation of core data set for WASG including comparative data
- Review Corporate Policy to integrate and update in light of COVID
- Ensure new duty to report forms are implemented and embedded across the council

2). Safe Workforce

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4

What does good look like?

We ensure that safe recruitment and human resource practices operate effectively and are embedded across the Council for the whole workforce (paid and unpaid). We ensure that individuals working with children and adults at risk are suitable for the role they are employed to do and are focused on outcomes for people. The whole workforce is clear about their duty to report concerns and to keep children and adults at risk safe.

Progress and Evidence

Safe Recruitment

In response to the pandemic, safe recruitment checks were adapted to reflect WG guidance regarding digital recruitment. Elements of digital recruitment continue to be utilised across the whole authority.

Full safeguarding checks are undertaken on every appointment with individuals not being set up on payroll until these are completed.

Safe recruitment is well established and embedded within the Council.

Volunteers

In regards to volunteers, a Volunteer Kinetic digital management system is in place. This means we have a live central record of volunteer safe recruitment information and activity. The system is structured so that, dependent on the role, the correct safe recruitment checks are carried out and logged on the volunteers' profiles. Training undertaken is also logged on the system (for example Safeguarding Level 1).

The GAVO, Volunteering for Wellbeing and MCC partnership continue to support community groups to develop good governance and safe recruitment.

Safeguarding training is available to all community groups through Be Community

Volunteering activity across the council is continuing to increase as services reopen.

Training

Level 1 training is delivered via a Training for Trainers approach. Over the last 18 months there has been positive improvement in directorates becoming increasingly self-sufficient in delivering at this level, with less dependency on the SGU. There is a training forum in place to ensure that trainers are kept up to date and provided with support and information, as well as providing a level of Quality Assurance. Forum meetings were held on 29th April 2021 and 4th May 2021 with good attendance.

There a system in place now which allows for all training records to be centrally recorded and monitored. However, there is still more work to be done to improve accuracy and automate the process. As yet we are still not able to answer the more fundamental question - *who needed training against who received it.*

Data from corporate training shows that **602** people attended Level 1 safeguarding during 2020-2021.

<u>Safeguarding Level 1 attendance by Directorate</u>	<u>2020-2021</u>
Directorate	Number

Resources	0
social care & Health	100
mon life	32
cyp inc schools	423
Operations (enterprise)	13
Volunteers	20
Unknown	3
Chief Execs	3
External	8
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>602</u>

In response to the crisis all direct training courses remain suspended. The council was quick to respond and launched digital versions of Level 1 safeguarding (via SWAY) the Level 2 renewal programme. The most recent addition to this is the Level 2 initial together with a range of digital approaches to level 3 and 4 safeguarding courses. Digital training will continue to be a mainstay of the training strategy, as a positive 'legacy' of the pandemic period.

Managing Professional Allegations

During 01/04/20 – 31/03/21 the Unit held Professional Strategy Meetings about 53 professionals, relating to 75 children following professional allegations.

During the same period 40 Professional Strategy Meetings were concluded, of which:

25 x Substantiated

11 x Unsubstantiated

4 x Unfounded

Professional allegation referrals come from a range of referral sources.

There is no data available for numbers of professional allegation processes undertaken in relation to adult safeguarding, or escalating concerns; however, data capture for this is in the process of being developed.

Analysis

The increased score from 3 to 4 is based on the strengthening arrangements for delivering and centrally recording safeguarding training data whilst recognising that this is still a work in progress. The aspiration remains that an updated HR function will provide monitoring of any unmet training needs from the point of recruitment.

Safe recruitment under the Corporate Safeguarding Policy continues to be a priority and there are good processes and systems in place to ensure that safe recruitment practice is followed. Operationally recruitment practices had to become more digital with the impact of COVID-19. As digital approaches continue to develop (as part of the legacy of COVID-19) safe recruitment practice will need to remain at forefront.

Key Strengths:

- High priority is given within the council to safe recruitment practices
- The GAVO, Volunteering for Wellbeing and MCC partnership continue to support community groups to develop good governance and safe recruitment.
- There is a strong level 1 training forum in place allowing directorates to be self-sufficient in ensuring Level 1 training whilst the SGU provides quality assurance and support.
- Monmouthshire is fully compliant with the management of Professional Concerns Guidance within Children and Adult Services and has begun to develop adult data.

Next Steps

- Continue to monitor progress in how the council centrally records mandatory training data
- Revise the safeguarding training strategy so that it reflects developments in digital training options
- Further develop directorate sufficiency for the delivery of Level 1 training
- Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront
- Develop data to enable reporting on professional concerns relating to adult safeguarding

Preventative Approach

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5

What does good look like?

We work with partners to identify emerging issues, risks and challenges to our communities. We demonstrate clear multiagency approaches to developing protocols, processes and practice in how we respond to these issues therefore reducing risks through early intervention and preventative approaches.

Progress and Evidence

VAWDASV and PREVENT

Training plans are in place across the council to ensure the right levels of training are place in respect of VAWDASV and PREVENT focusing on early recognition of concerns and referral on.

There is further work to be done regarding the council's ability to accurately report on VAWDASV training for Groups 1 and 2, for both initial take up and renewal. This is complicated by the fact that the host site for the training is via ABUHB Learning@Wales platform meaning that some previous training data is no longer available and the training data we have is not in a sufficiently detailed format. (This links to the same issues regarding the need to strengthen arrangements for centrally recording employee data as in section 2.)

However, taken from health board data, Monmouthshire's training rate for Group 1 was just under 100% against a national average of 68% completion rate.

Practitioners in adult and children's services continue to work with multi-agency partners regarding high risk domestic abuse cases through the MARAC process (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences).

This year **120** MARACs were held which is an increase from 112 in 2020, and 97 in 2019.

CHILD EXPLOITATION

During 01/04/20 – 31/03/21, 47 children (up from 32 children last year) were subject to Child Exploitation Meetings.

In addition to this, 2 MCC children were discussed as part of a Complex Strategy Meeting considering 5 children.

Fortnightly MASE Meetings (Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meetings) continue between Police, Social Care and partner agencies to identify any patterns, locations and perpetrator identification. The terms of reference for this meeting now extends to children who are at risk of criminal exploitation.

There is good liaison in place between safeguarding, the Safer Monmouthshire Group and the council's Public Protection Unit including licensing.

Prior to the COVID pandemic a Monmouthshire Exploitation Group (MEG) with representation from Safeguarding Unit, Public Protection, Partnerships, Police, Gwent Missing Children's Team, Education, Community Based teams was formed. The group initially oversaw the development of a Monmouthshire Protocol for responding to Modern Day Slavery and Exploitation. The group was put on hold through the pandemic, however, there are now plans in place for a re-launch which will provide the opportunity to reconsider the implementation of the policy particularly around training and awareness raising.

Safeguarding in Schools

Monmouthshire has adopted a proactive approach to responding to issues of sexual harassment in schools and has worked with colleagues in VAWDASV to promote a Whole School Approach. Schools will be expected to address this issue within the current SAFE process. This will help us scope what issues are being raised within the school settings and use the information to provide targeted support if this is required.

There is an anti-bullying prevention group established in MCC.

Additional resources are being provided to support services within schools to respond to pupil wellbeing issues in regards to the impact of the pandemic – these included summer holiday education hubs.

Providing Effective Early Help

The Information/ Advice and Assistance (IAA) facility at the front door of Children's and Adults (FISH) services are well embedded. Numbers of referrals received into children and adults services continue to show an upward trend.

The Early Help Panel (EHP) within Children's Services has been operating since Jan 18 and has been recognised nationally as an example of effective early help practice. The early help

panels provide streamlined referrals for families who need preventative and early help from a range of partner agencies and services. During the period April 2020 – March 2021 an average number of 29 referrals per week were made into the EHP equating to 3.4% of the child population in MCC.

Multi-agency meetings (MAMs) are in place in each of the secondary schools and there is a good link between these and the EHP.

Preventative approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Early help and support services continued to provide services via digital solutions.

A parenting advice and support line was put up within 2 days of lockdown and over the course of the year 445 calls were received. Resources have been secured to ensure that this advice line remains in place until at least the end of March 2022.

The council turned its resources to supporting the range of community and volunteering activity that sprang up in response to the crisis.

Housing

Recent changes in the Council's homeless responsibilities has had an impact on the profile of our homeless clients with higher and more complex needs, making safeguarding of even more relevance, including domestic abuse, homeless young people and care leavers, people with mental health difficulties and applications from high risk offenders. Support to homeless individuals continues to be a focused activity but equally continues to be a challenge in respect of the available resources. As of August 2021, there were **147** households in temporary accommodation, including **73** households in bed and breakfast accommodation. Of these, 60 were single homeless people with multiple support needs.

In order for us to place more appropriately (for both the applicant and other people) and manage risk more effectively there continues to be a need for additional numbers and types of accommodation and support for homeless applicants.

Since last year the Council has established a Homeless Transition Plan but also now needs, under the Councils Social Justice Strategy, to establish a Housing Support Programme Strategy by April 2022 and a Rapid Rehousing Protocol by Sept 22, which effectively will absorb the Transition Plan.

Last year saw the introduction of the Housing Intervention Panel with the aim of preventing homelessness or the threat of homelessness and the provision of co-ordinated services to vulnerable individuals and households through a multi-agency forum. This has now been established as an embedded part of homelessness prevention and housing support.

Communities

A social worker within the Partnerships team provides direct support to community groups around prevention and early intervention and acts as a first port of call for safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding training is available to all community groups which raises knowledge at a community level

Local Safeguarding Networks

Local Safeguarding Network (LSN) meetings and Safeguarding Practitioner Forums were initially put on hold during the pandemic but these have recommenced since November 2020.

LSNs are used as a multi-agency mechanism for professional leads to exchange information regarding safeguarding issues and build knowledge of safeguarding activity and services across the council. Wider safeguarding practitioner forums have now also recommenced (May 2021) and the council supported to the work of the National Safeguarding Week in November 2020.

Analysis

Preventative approaches remain a strong area of safeguarding practice within Monmouthshire, built on solid partnership working developed over time. A quote from CIW Annual Letter 19/20 illustrates this well.

"A particular strength of Monmouthshire County Council is its commitment to develop a range of innovative and creative preventative services, and ways of working with people in finding their own solutions in preventing or delaying their need for statutory care and support. We saw evidence in our annual activity of an extensive range of preventative community-based services that support early intervention and good outcomes for people. "

This was equally reiterated in the outcome letter following the CIW Assurance Checking February 2021.

The score remaining at 4 in 2020 reflected the impact of the pandemic and the requirement to massively alter the way that the council connects with vulnerable families and individuals. That said the council responded quickly and flexibly in finding alternative ways to maintain services, keep eyes and ears open and provide support where it was needed. The increased score to 5 is proposed on the basis of how in many ways the response to the pandemic did not inhibited the growth of preventative safeguarding services and in many ways served to strengthen them.

Key Strengths:

- Partnership working across the council is recognised as strong
- Consistent drive towards developing preventative approaches across the council are evident
- Place based approaches (adults) are developing and there is strong links with communities
- Early help panel (children) is well established
- Proactive approaches are in place to issues that impact on vulnerable individuals and communities.

Next Steps

- Work to resolve the issues around being able to report and monitor VAWDASV training across the council.
- Ensure full roll-out of the Modern Day Slavery protocol across the council
- Further analyse and monitor the impact of COVID-19 on families and communities and ensure that services are in place to respond to increased risk and vulnerability
- Continue to support the Council's approach to prevention of homelessness through strengthening homeless prevention, increasing homeless accommodation and enhancing specialist service provision for young people and offenders.

- Continue to develop the Community Support Network approach with communities.

4). Robust Protection

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 3

What does good look like?

We operate best practice in protecting children and adults at risk and ensure that all concerns about possible abuse or neglect are recognised and responded to appropriately. Multi-agency plans and interventions reduce risks and needs for children and vulnerable adults including those at risk of significant harm.

Progress and Evidence

Children's Services

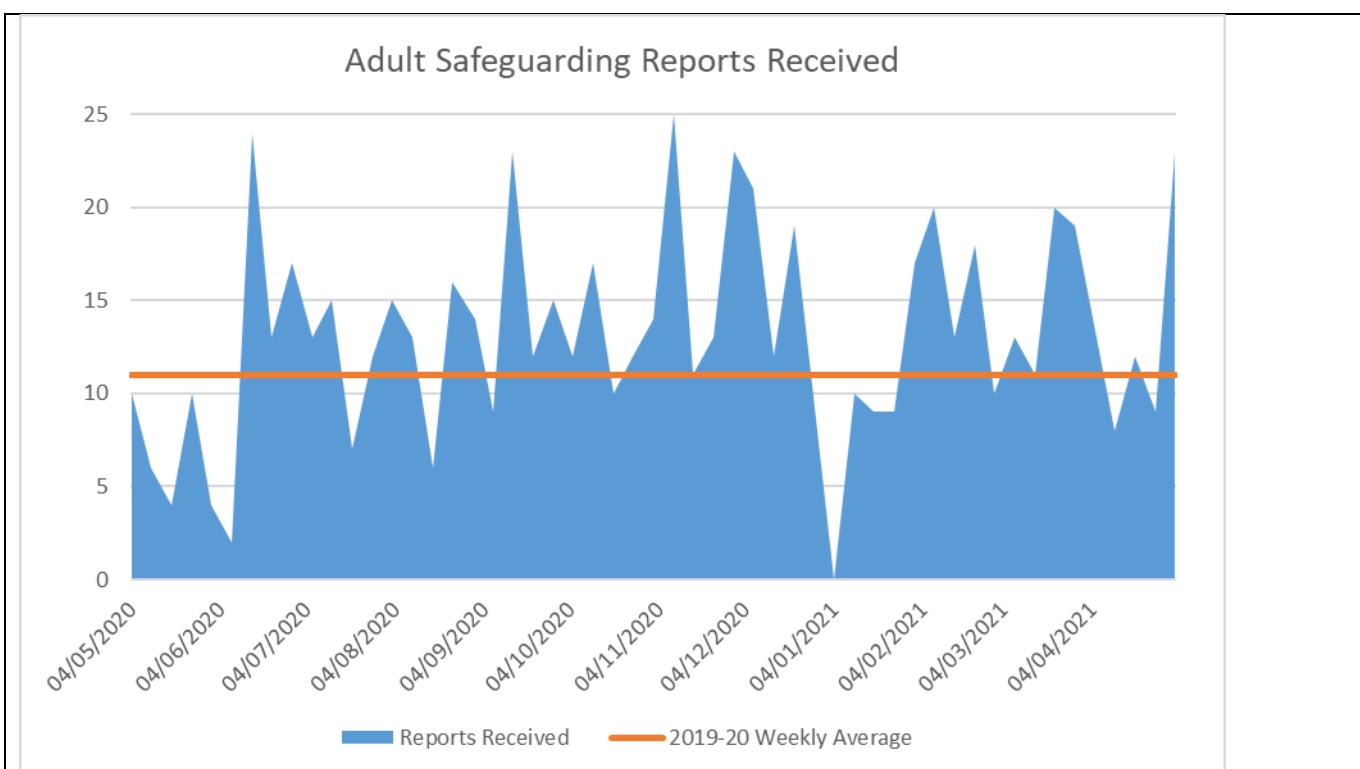
Children's services remain committed to promoting good practice around children protection and safeguarding through the current development programme *Building Best Practice*. Family support services across all tiers of need and vulnerability have been significantly enhanced and there is a good level of stability within the workforce and leadership.

Within the service there was a slight reduction in the numbers of children who are looked after this year, although the overall trend remains upward trend. At year end the number of children looked after was **213** (from 219).

At year end the number of children on the child protection register was **60** (a significant reduction from previous year end of 112). The end of year figure reflected a particular point in time where some larger sibling groups had been de-registered. The number of children on child protection plans does fluxuate – and already we have seen the Q1 figure increase to 84 children. The critical issue here, is that the right children are registered and remain subject to child protection core groups and planning for the right length of time. In the year ahead the areas for improvement include the timeliness of initial core groups (72# / 66.7%) and statutory visits (1408# / 66.6%).

Adult Safeguarding

The introduction of the statutory duty to report under the SSWB Act, as well as the low threshold for reporting concerns (which can be based on reasonable cause to suspect) continues to create an upward trend in the number of safeguarding concerns reported via safeguarding referrals. Over the year, 680 safeguarding reports were made concerning 463 adults.



The services’ capacity to complete adult protection enquiries within the statutory timeframe of 7 days remains challenging, and was achieved in just over half of cases (51.1%). This will be an area of focus over the coming year. An adult safeguarding dashboard is in development to help monitor and analyse adult safeguarding activity.

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures come into force in April 2020 and these are now well-embedded into the operations of adults and children’s services. Currently, a new safeguarding referral form is being implemented in line with the new procedures and ensuring this is embedded across all agencies is a priority area moving forward.

In January 2021 the integrated front-door for safeguarding (the Safeguarding Hub) was implemented including co-location of a Police decision maker. Positively, this has seen increased information sharing and multi-agency working. There is a regional process underway for reviewing and evaluating the safeguarding hub.

A CIW focussed inspection for Safeguarding was undertaken in February 2020 and an Assurance Check undertaken in February 2021 looking at how people were safeguarded and their well-being promoted during the pandemic. The findings from both were positive with key strengths noted including:

- The well-being and voice of the child / adult at risk is central to the safeguarding process
- Thorough and responsive safeguarding practices
- The local authority is committed to improvement and has a dedicated workforce who are committed to safeguarding.
- Partner agencies feel confident and able to challenge safeguarding decisions and are clear of the process to challenge safeguarding decisions.
- Positive working relationships with partner agencies and partnership working as a major strength.

There were 0 adult practice reviews / child practice reviews or domestic homicide reviews undertaken within Monmouthshire in 2020 - 2021.

Analysis

Overall ensuring robust protection for people at risk of harm is a strength within the Council with key strengths in:

- Partnership working
- Commitment to delivering best practice
- Rigorous and transparent approaches to 'understanding the business' and responding to challenges
- Implementation of the safeguarding hub

Never-the-less, the persistent upward trend in numbers of referrals into both children's and adults services, and for individuals with housing / homelessness needs, has meant that health, social care and housing services across the board are under immense strain. In addition to this, the longer term impact of COVID-19 and extended periods of lock-down on vulnerable families and individuals cannot be underestimated, and has led to increasing complexities in all aspects of practice. These pressures have meant that some additional actions have been taken to ensure that services remain operational and that those in the highest need of care and support are safeguarded. For this reason the self-assessed score remains at 3.

Next Steps

- Evaluate the outcomes and impact of the Safeguarding Hub
- Continue to assess and respond to the risks related to the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19
- Develop data so that adult safeguarding can be accurately monitored and reported on
- Improve performance in the completion of adult safeguarding enquiries within 7 days
- Improve performance in child protection core groups and statutory visits
- Implement the new safeguarding referral form across the council and partner agencies

5). Safe Services – delivered through commissioning arrangements, grants, partnerships and volunteering

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4

What does good look like?

We use our influence to ensure that services operating in Monmouthshire, including commissioned and those outside the direct control of the Council, do so in ways which promote the welfare and safety of children and adults at risk.

Progress and Evidence

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been updated to include the agreed Framework for Minimum Standards for Safeguarding Across Commissioned Services. The current SAFE process will place an additional focus on safe commissioning.

Commissioning Leads within SCH ensure positive relationships with commissioned providers are established allowing any emerging concerns to be addressed through good partnership

working. This means that within social care there is a robust, risk-based, contract management and quality assurance process across all providers.

The COVID pandemic has been a particularly challenging period for provider services. During the COVID-19 pandemic the Local Authority worked collaboratively to provide on-going support to provider services and commissioned services, including residential and nursing homes. All providers adopted a risk assessment approach around their operations which were discussed with the Local Authority.

There are on-going challenges for many of our provider services, particularly within adult social care, related to the on-going impact of the pandemic on staffing including severe shortages in direct care.

Similarly the impact of the pandemic continues to have severe consequences for health services, which in turn has an impact on the Local Authority and creates significant challenges within the partnership landscape.

There are well developed arrangements in public protection to ensure safeguarding is given due regard:

- safeguarding training is a requirement for licenced taxi /hackney and private hire drivers.
- school contracts are additionally required to undertake MCC training every two years
- voluntary safeguarding training is offered to alcohol/ entertainment and late night refreshment licensees.

During the reporting period our Licensing section ensured full compliance with all licences, including renewals, issued in the year.

Proactive checks are undertaken throughout the year, both licenced hackney carriage/private hire vehicles and licensed premises. Drivers, operators and vehicles are subject to on-the-spot visits, typically annually. Added to this all complaints are actioned. These processes ensure that no drivers or licensed premises remain unchecked between licence periods.

A report is being presented to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee on 14th September 2021 which if approved with effect from 1st October 2021 DBS checks will be more frequent. All new drivers will be required to do 6 monthly checks an existing licence holders will be required to do 6 monthly checks upon renewal. Operators and vehicle owners who are not drivers will also be required to do annual checks and operators will have to check staff that they employ, who have access to booking records or dispatch vehicle, have had a DBS check.

This report was carried out in line with Welsh Government recommendations, which is the first phase of working towards national standards and the Department of Transport Best Practice Guide.

Monmouthshire Letting and Hiring process requires evidence of the hirer's Safeguarding processes as mandatory prior to letting council property.

Volunteering

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy and Volunteering Policy sets out clear guidelines and expectations for volunteers in commissioned services, which are reflected in individual service contracts.

The Council's role as an 'enabler' and 'influencer' of safeguarding standards within volunteer groups and organisations has developed significantly over the months of the pandemic.

A range of placed based community support network meetings take place across the county, part of the function is to enable and influence groups to develop good governance, best working practices and safe recruitment with safeguarding imbedded as a underpinning principle.

Safeguarding training is available to all community groups which raises knowledge at a community level

Analysis

Social Care and Health have clear operating processes in place to ensure a robust approach for all social care commissioning for children and adults.

Schools, and other parts of the Council working with children / adults at risk, indicate there are robust arrangements in place for contracted services (including individual school contracts, transport, leisure services).

There is good evidence of safeguarding being embedded within licensing services and other areas of PPU.

However, the evaluative score remains at 3 because:

- We are in the process of completing the current SAFE process
- The changing nature of the task (i.e. supporting provider and commissioned services with their safeguarding arrangements has become considerably more complex since the outbreak of COVID-19)
- Some of the severe current challenges within the provider landscape for SCH.

Key Next Steps for 2019 - 2020

Ensure that the next SAFE process supports directorates to review the Minimum Standards Self-Assessment Matrix, and evaluate outcomes

Appendix 3

Safeguarding CURRENT ACTIVITY PLAN (20201 – 2022)

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
GOVERNANCE		
Implement next SAFE process (2021 – 2023)	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023
Evaluate learning and outcomes process and ensure this informs future planning	Safeguarding Unit and WASG	March 2023
Development / implementation of core data set for WASG including comparative data	Safeguarding Unit WASG	Sept 2021
Review Corporate Policy to integrate and update in light of COVID	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022
Ensure new duty to report forms are implanted and embedded across the council	Safeguarding Unit / WASG	Sept 2021
SAFE WORKKFORCE		
Continue to monitor progress in how the council centrally records mandatory training data	People's Services	March 2022
Revise the safeguarding training strategy so that it reflects developments in digital training options	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022
Further develop directorate sufficiency for the delivery of Level 1 training	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront	People's Services	March 2022
Develop data to enable reporting on professional concerns relating to adult safeguarding	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022
Preventative Approaches		
Work to resolve the issues around being able to report and monitor VAWDASV training across the council.	Partnership People's Services	March 2022
Ensure full roll-out of the Modern Day Slavery protocol across the council	MEG / Safeguarding Unit	Jan 2022
Further analyse and monitor the impact of COVID-19 on families and communities and ensure that services are in place to respond to increased risk and vulnerability	SCH / WASG	March 2022
Continue to support the Council's approach to prevention of homelessness through strengthening homeless prevention, increasing homeless accommodation and enhancing specialist service provision for young people and offenders.	Enterprise	September 2022

Continue to develop the Community Support Network approach with communities.	Partnerships	September 2022
Robust Protection		
Evaluate the outcomes and impact of the Safeguarding Hub	Safeguarding Unit	Sept 2022
Continue to assess and respond to the risks related to the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19	SCH	March 2022
Develop data so that adult safeguarding can be accurately monitored and reported on	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022
Improve performance in the completion of adult safeguarding enquiries within 7 days	Adult Services	March 2022
Improve performance in child protection core groups and statutory visits	Children's Services	March 2022
Implement the new safeguarding referral form across the council and partner agencies	Safeguarding Unit	December 2021
SAFE SERVICES		
Ensure that the next SAFE process supports directorates to review the Minimum Standards Self-Assessment Matrix, and evaluate outcomes	Safeguarding Unit WASG	March 2023

APPENDIX 4

Review of Previous Action Plan 2020 - 2021 action plan

GREEN – Completed

AMBER – In Progress, continuing

RED – Delayed, not started,

BLUE no longer required / changed

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	RAG	Comment
GOVERNANCE				
Evaluate summative learning and outcomes from current (2019) process and ensure this informs future planning	Chair WASG	March 2021	GREEN	Now implementing SAFE 2021 - 2023
Plan and implement next SAFE process (2021 – 2023)	SGU	March 2021	AMBER	In progress
Ensure that any learning and actions from the IA report are taken forward	SGU	March 2021	GREEN	Report issues and actions completed
Development / implementation of core data set for WASG including comparative data	SGU	Sept 2021	AMBER	Carried forward
Develop the process for 'learning in action' for the WASG based on case scenarios / areas of concern to replace the SBAR approach.	SGU WASG	March 2021	GREEN	S/G star form in place
SAFE WORKFORCE				
Implement the upgrade of the HR data base to support all aspects of safeguarding as appropriate	Head of People Services	Dec 2021	BLUE	Sitting within People's Services – no specific action required –linked to

				the central recording of training
Revise the safeguarding training strategy so that it reflects developments in digital training options	Safeguarding Unit	Sept 2021		Carried Forward
Further develop directorate sufficiency for the delivery of Level 1 training	Safeguarding Unit	Sept 2021		Good progress Carried forward
Update safeguarding training to reflect the implementation of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures	Safeguarding Unit	Sept 2021		Level 1 and 2 updated
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment	People's Services	Sept 2021		Underway
Continue to develop the council's relationship with community groups to support safe volunteer workforce practices	Enterprise	Sept 2021		On-going – no specific action required
Develop data to enable reporting on professional concerns relating to adult safeguarding	SGU	Sept 2021		In progress Carried Forward
PREVENTATIVE APPROACHES				
Support the further development of MASE to include integrated approaches to all aspects of exploitation	SGU	March 2021		In place
Ensure full roll-out of the Modern Day Slavery protocol across the council	MEG	Sept 2021		Carried forward
Re-launch of the MEG	SCH Directorate	March 2021		First re-launch meeting has taken place
Further analyse the impact of COVID-19 on families and communities and ensure that services are in place to respond to increased risk and vulnerability	SCH Directorate WASG	Sept 2021		On-going

Support the Council's approach to prevention of homelessness	Enterprise	March 2022		Accommodation for homeless people has been increased and services expanded however, further challenges remain
ROBUST PROTECTION				
Ensure that plans are in place to implement the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and WCCIS without unnecessary disruption to operational issues / quality assurance processes	Develop data so that adult safeguarding can be accurately monitored and reported on.	Dec 2021		Plans to WCCIS are paused. Work is in progress to ensure disruption is minimised
Implementation of an integrated front-door for safeguarding	Safeguarding Unit	March 2021		Completed 2021 – evaluation in progress
Further analysis of risks related to the impact of COVID-19	SCH Directorate	September 2021		Actions in place On -going
Continue to deliver risk assessment and strengths based practice across both Children's and Adults Services and at a partnership level	SCH Directorate	March 2022		On-going No need of further specific actions
Develop data so that adult safeguarding can be accurately monitored and reported on.	Safeguarding Unit	September 2022		In progress – carry forward
SAFE SERVICES				
Ensure that the next SAFE process supports directorates to review the Minimum Standards Self-Assessment Matrix, and evaluate outcomes	Safeguarding Unit WASG	September 2023		In progress – carry forward

APPENDIX 5

Safeguarding Risk Assessment



2021SeptSafeguardin
g Risk Assessment.xls