

SUBJECT: SAFEGUARDING EVALUATION REPORT April 2021 – March 2022

MEETING: Joint Committee, People and Performance

DATE: 11th October 2022

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 2021 / 2022, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2022 - 2023.
- 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 July 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

For members to scrutinise the Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report and Activity prior to its presentation at Council on 27th October 2022.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1** Appendix 2 is based on safeguarding activity and information from April 2021 to March 2022. During the majority of this period COVID restrictions have remained in place, which had an impact on operational safeguarding activity and where relevant, this is referenced within the evaluation and informs the safeguarding risk assessment, which remained in place during this period. (Appendix 5)
- 3.2** 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) and Wales Safeguarding Procedures, has helped to inform this evaluation report. The analysis reflects progress against priority areas set out within the policy and draws on data and information regarding both children and adults at risk.

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

The Cornerstones of Safeguarding in Monmouthshire



3.4 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 the Internal Audit Report on Safeguarding Training issued March 2021.

3.6 The self-assessment score has been agreed by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group (WASG) 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 2022

<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>	<u>April 2021 – March 2022</u>
Good Governance	4	5	5	5	5	5
Safe Workforce	3	4	3	3	4	4
Preventative Approach	3	4	4	4	5	4
Robust Protection	4	4	4	3	3	4
Safe Services	2	3	3	3	4	4

3.7 Priority improvement actions arising from the evaluation form the basis of the action plan which is implemented and monitored through the WASG (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 Safeguarding vulnerable people is central to the Council and requires strong leadership and governance. An evaluation of safeguarding within Monmouthshire County Council is therefore reported to the Council on an annual basis.

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:

Members of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group
Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Corporate Safeguarding Policy

11 AUTHORS:

Head of Children’s Services – Diane Corrister
Safeguarding Service Manger – Kelly Turner

12 CONTACT DETAILS:

Diane Corrister
dianecorrister@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Kelly Turner
kellyturner@monmouthshire.gov.uk
01291 638303

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 the Gwent Safeguarding Board to ensure good alignment and maximise our resources.

PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:

SAFEGUARDING AND RISK ASSESSMENT DURING COVID:

April 2021 – March 2022 has been a period predominantly impacted upon by Covid restrictions, based on Government guidelines and in line with Chief Executive direction. There has been continuous risk assessment on Safeguarding practice, with weekly emails from Paul Matthews, Chief Executive and Matthew Phillips, Chief Officer People and Governance providing information to the whole authority which influenced safe practices across the council. Monmouthshire Local Authority was also provided an opportunity to come together through the “cwtch” allowing issues to be discussed on a digital platform.

SAFEGUARDING AUDIT FRAMEWORK EVALUATION [SAFE]:

SAFE roll out 2021-2023 has commenced with a decision for a staged approach so each Directorate is given dedicated time to ensure effective Quality Assurance for each area with a personal review meeting by a member of the Safeguarding Unit. This approach has utilised the Safeguarding Business Support Manager role to co-ordinate the dissemination of the SAFE and track progress and completion.

The first SAFE roll out was given to People and Governance, which has been fully completed. Policy, Performance and Scrutiny and Health and Social Care are the next cohort, with most of the SAFE’s in progress. The final Directorate for consideration will be Enterprise and Mon Life.

Once a SAFE has been received by the Safeguarding Unit, they are reviewed and returned with suggestions prior to arranging a quality assurance review with the Designated Safeguarding Lead [DSL] / Owner of the SAFE. All SAFE’s completed, with oversight from the Safeguarding Unit have been completed to a good standard, with appropriate action plans in place to mitigate risk.

101 SAFE requests are sent out across the council per rolling programme, this included 35 schools, 1 PRS, and 26 early learning settings.

SAFEGUARDING CORPORATE POLICY:

Safeguarding Corporate Policy was reviewed throughout this period, to include recognition of new legislation with the Wales Safeguarding Policy and inclusion of current contact details for the Safeguarding Unit. The formatting of the document was made more user friendly to signpost to guidance / policies via hyperlinks.

DUTY TO REPORT FORMS:

The new Duty to Report [DTR] form was reviewed by the regional Gwent Safeguarding Board in order for the content to align and be compliant not only with the Social Services and Wellbeing [Wales] Act 2014 [SSWB 2014] but also the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2020. It was hoped that the revised

Report would result in stronger multi-agency collaboration and an improved information sharing process between the report maker and Adult and Children's Services to effectively safeguard and support children, vulnerable adults and their families within Monmouthshire. The DTR was launched by in July 2021 and adopted in Monmouthshire across our locality teams and third sector providers. The new DTR is held on the Monmouthshire Hub and Gwent Safeguarding Board website for easy access.

GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD [GSB]:

There remains strong links with the Gwent Safeguarding Board (GSB). Jane Rogers, Chief Officer Social Care & Health, is co-chair of the Board and Diane Corriester Head of Childrens Services, and Eve Parkinson, Head of Adults Services represent Monmouthshire. The GSB is supported in their work by a number of sub groups that manage the core business and other more specific pieces of work, which deliver on the strategic priorities set by the Board each year. Members of the Safeguarding Unit continue to be represented on all groups / sub groups to deliver the specified outcomes and in addition maintain good links into the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Board.

The Whole Authority Safeguarding Group (WASG) continued to meet on a digital platform through the pandemic. The group continues to ensure that corporate safeguarding has oversight at a senior level, so that risks can be identified and managed throughout the council.

ANALYSIS:

The links between the Safeguarding Unit and other Directorates demonstrates good communication and how Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, which reflects our self-assessment score of **5**.

KEY STRENGTHS:

- Safeguarding and risk assessment during Covid
- Safeguarding Audit Framework Evaluation
- DTR being fully adopted
- Continuous positive relationships between Safeguarding Unit and Gwent Safeguarding Board

NEXT STEPS:

- Completion of SAFEs
- Data set for WASG to be updated
- Corporate Safeguarding Policy to be ratified and disseminated

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:

TRAINING:

There remains a high priority within the Council for safe recruitment practices; training is central to this. A system has been devised for this information to be centrally stored within the Corporate Training Unit, however, there remains a commitment to further develop this into a “resource link”. MCC are working on implementing a system “Thinqi” across the organisation, which would automatically record training attendance via TEAMS/Outlook/Booking system and is being overseen by HR and the Data Systems Team.

The Safeguarding Policy shows the levels of current training required; however, this has not been revised as the National Training Standards are being drawn up after a regional multi agency period of consultation. MCC will align to the Safeguarding Training Standards once the consultation period is completed and standards agreed. We were advised in March 2022 that the consultation phase in relation to the draft Standards and Framework is due to begin in April 2022 and members of the Safeguarding Unit have been identified to participate to ensure representation from Monmouthshire.

Mon Life and individual schools undertake their own Level 1 Safeguarding Training. The plan was to build other Directorates into this training pool, however this was disrupted by the pandemic. As Level One has successfully developed on a digital platform there has been less need to expand the training pool. Current SWAY E learning arrangements have provided a robust platform to implement this training council wide, and this is well received, meaning less face to face sessions are needed. In the region of 500 have received Level one training during this period

Safeguarding Level 2 is delivered by a representative from the Safeguarding Unit alongside a co-trainer from other Directorates. This has been delivered on a digital platform, however plans to move this back face to face when possible. 61 people completed Level 2 training in this time period

In November 2020 an internal training audit was undertaken, which concluded that ‘Considerable Assurance’ can be gained from the control environment. There was, nevertheless, some areas for action in particular around the clarification of roles under the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the identification of the relevant officers, which was achieved upon policy review. There were also improvements required in the evidencing of training undertaken, which was assisted by the planned improvements to the People Services’ ResourceLink system and will further be strengthened by the implementation of system “Thinqi”.

DISCLOSURE BARRING SERVICE [DBS]:

The current DBS digital system encourages staff to set up an account that sends an automatic reminder to renew. This provides a more streamline and robust mechanism for regular updates in staff DBS checks.

People Services have reported a fast turnover of DBS checks and there are no longer gaps where a person’s DBS has lapsed, requiring additional risk assessments. This also means that new staff are able to enter their posts more quickly, all of which supports a more efficient workforce ensuring appropriate services are continually offered.

When risk assessments are required due to a lapse in DBS check or concern raised, these are undertaken by Kelly Turner in the safeguarding unit, with further consideration and sign off by the Head of Service.

PRACTITIONER CONCERNS ALLEGATIONS:

The Local Authority has overall responsibility for the management of the Practitioner Concerns / People in a Position of Trust process. When a case relates to a practitioner within the Health Board setting, Corporate Health Safeguarding will take responsibility for enquiries being undertaken and the completion of actions identified. However, the overall accountability for the process remains with the Lead Officer within the Local Authority.

The Safeguarding Unit has developed a tracker to manage both children and adults Practitioner Concerns Allegations; this identifies the status of each case, including what investigation is required, prevents drift and details the outcome of each process. This is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Safeguarding Unit. In the cases linked to Practitioner Concerns with adults at risk, the database enables the monitoring of the allegation when the Lead Co-ordinator is outside the Local Authority, eg Health.

A contact log has also been developed to record when a DTR is received, when threshold decision is made and the date a Strategy discussion is requested and held. This provides a clear chronology for Practitioner Concern cases. All correspondence between the Safeguarding Unit and partner agencies are detailed within the contact log, as well as the conclusion of the process.

There are ongoing regional discussions and Task and Finish groups taking place to explore and review the effectiveness of the Practitioner Concerns meetings, with an attempt to streamline them nationally. Within the Gwent Child Protection Co-ordinator bi-monthly meetings and the regional Safeguarding Board meetings, this is being explored and reviewed regularly.

During 01/04/21 – 31/03/22 the Unit held Professional Strategy Meetings about **63** professionals, relating to **78** children following professional allegations.

During the same period **49** Professional Strategy Meetings were concluded, of which:

33 x Substantiated

9 x Unsubstantiated

6 x Unfounded

1 x case transferred responsibility to another Local Authority

Professional allegation referrals come from a range of referral sources.

Data capture has been developed during this period to evidence the number of professional allegations in relation to adult safeguarding:

During 01/04/21 – 31/03/22 the Unit held Professional Strategy Meetings about 43 professionals

During the same period, 33 Professional Strategy Meetings were concluded, of which:

14 x Substantiated

13 x Unsubstantiated

6 x Unfounded

ANALYSIS:

Safe recruitment under the Corporate Safeguarding Policy continues to be a priority and there are good processes and systems in place, which are continually reviewed and monitored to ensure that safe recruitment practice is followed. As digital approaches continue to develop (as part of the legacy of COVID-19) safe recruitment practice will need to remain at forefront.

The score remains at 4 as we continue to strengthen arrangements around our safe recruitment practice and in line with the ongoing development of "Thingy" to automatically record training attendance.

During this period, the responsibility for managing and chairing both Children and Adult Practitioners Concerns meetings has been under the remit of the Child Protection Co-ordinator; the Child Protection Coordinator has significant experience in adult services, and therefore able to provide some resilience during a period of staff shortage. This has supported consistency in respect of threshold and monitoring

of the process being followed and within appropriate timescales. It has been noted that as a result better dialogue is taking place at an earlier point to ensure the Practitioner Concern element is being identified. There has been an important development in the recognition of the Practitioner Concern element of the policies and procedures; the Safeguarding Unit appear much more confident in identifying if there is a concern around a Practitioner / Person in a Position of Trust and the safeguarding in this arena is now running parallel and in conjunction rather than afterwards.

KEY STRENGTHS:

- Continuous priority given to safe recruitment practice within the Council
- The develop of SWAY E-learning has promoted a strong Level 1 training forum across Directorates with continued quality assurance and support from the Safeguarding Unit.
- The Practitioner Concerns guidance has been fully adopted within Monmouthshire and tracking data is now in place to ensure recording and processes are followed in a timely manner.

NEXT STEPS:

- Ongoing development of “Thingj” to ensure training records are centrally managed
- Training Policy needs to look at mandatory training and consider other areas that need to be recorded, including VAWDSV, Prevent and GDPR
- Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront
- To further aid the efficiency and management of Practitioner Concerns, a model is being developed on Flo / Plant to ensure appropriate safeguards are put in place. This will be GDPR compliant
- Regional Safeguarding Leads will continue to meet to review the Practitioner Concerns process and review the effectiveness of the “outcomes” of the process
- Training to be developed around understanding of Practitioner Concerns, for those who are employers and those who are at greater risk of being discussed in the arena, eg Education, Foster Carers and Health professionals

3. PREVENTATIVE APPROACH

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4

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:

VAWDASV Training continues to be mandatory for all Council employees, with Group 1 now being completed on an external E-Learning platform. During this period a total of 49 people undertook this training. This can be accessed through the Hub via an external link. Staff are regularly reminded to complete this mandatory training and this is also part of the induction process for new starters, to ensure compliance.

The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference [MARAC] has continued throughout this period, being held on a fortnightly basis, via Microsoft Teams with the aim of risk assessing on a multi-agency basis, victims who are at high risk of domestic abuse. There continues to be a good representation from all agencies at these meetings to ensure effective Safeguarding planning. This has included new agencies, such as the Phoenix Project who are supporting perpetrators of domestic violence to recognise their behaviours. Cases discussed at MARAC have risen to 130 [from 120 last year]. This increase mirrors an increase in National demand for MARAC, and regionally there are aims to develop a MARAC Demand Management Plan.

There have been no Domestic Abuse Homicide Reviews for Monmouthshire during this period.

MODERN DAY SLAVERY:

There remains a consistent drive towards developing approaches regarding Modern Day Slavery. The Quality Assurance Officer within the Safeguarding Unit has driven the protocol, which has been rolled out to Children's Services and introduced within Adult Teams. Covid has delayed the full rollout of this protocol, in particular for Adults and Housing, however, external training is being provided by the Police, which covers Exploitation, Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism [NRM] process. This training is promoted by the Workforce development Team in Monmouthshire, and has been well received.

NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM [NRM]:

The National Referral Mechanism is the UK system for officially recognising victims of trafficking and the decisions about whether or not they are a victim made by the Home Office. Due to the national delay for NRM Referrals from the Home Office, Gwent has been part of a pilot scheme around responding to the NRM, which commenced in May 2021. This means that decisions about whether or not a child is a victim will be made by local Safeguarding partners, including Children's Services, Police and Health so that decisions and outcomes can be made on a multi-agency Safeguarding basis in each child's best interest. Alongside the pilot scheme there is an ongoing steering group, which will continue to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot scheme, which has already been extended for a six month period. From June 2021 up until February 2022, 36 NRM referrals had been submitted throughout Gwent, 10 of which were regarding children from Monmouthshire. All referrals have been processed within the 90 day limit.

There has been 2 types of exploitation identified;

Child Sexual Exploitation

The abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the exploitation of another as well as personal sexual gratification.

Examples: Use of children in sex work, trafficking of children for sexual abuse and exploitation, child pornography, sexual slavery.

Child Criminal Exploitation

The use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour. Economic exploitation implies the idea of a certain gain or profit through the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. This material interest has an impact on the economy of a certain unit, be it the State, the community or the family.

Examples: Child domestic work, child soldiers and the recruitment and involvement of children in armed conflict, child bondage, the use of children from criminal activities include the sale and distribution of narcotics, the involvement of children in any harmful or hazardous work.

Criminal exploitation is also known as 'county lines' and is when gangs and organised crime networks exploit children to sell drugs. Often these children are made to travel across counties and they use dedicated mobile 'phone 'lines' to supply drugs.

The Council strives to create an environment where child exploitation is identified and addresses. The Authority is committed to actively working with partners to identify children at risk and prevent this form of abuse.

During **01/04/21 – 31/03/22**, **61** children (up from 47 children last year) were subject to Child Exploitation Meetings, where consideration is given for children to become part of a Gwent Police Operation named Quartz.

Regionally Monmouthshire have the second highest number of children on Operation Quartz. This is due to the high level of training multi agency professionals have, which increases recognition and reporting to the safeguarding arena.

Child Exploitation remains a main focus for Children's Services and partner agencies. Over the latter part of this review period, we are starting to see a noticeable increase in criminal exploitation, however, the figures overall for the year stand at:

Criminal x 29

Sexual x 32

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

Bi-monthly MASE Meetings (Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meetings) continue between Police, Social Care and partner agencies to identify any patterns, locations and perpetrator identification. MASE is a strategic meeting which looks at disruption, perpetrators, places of interest and themes.

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

In November 2021, the Monmouthshire Exploitation Group [MEG] recommenced following a period of absence as a result of the Covid pandemic. MEG is responsible for identifying and analysing criminal or sexual exploitation across the county, working with partners to explore any emerging themes whereby further investigation, disruption or protection can be addressed through either the Crime & Disorder Group (CAD), Serious Organised Crime group (SOC) or the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation group (MASE). The Monmouthshire Exploitation Group reports directly to the Public Service Board's Safer Monmouthshire Group and Whole Authority Safeguarding Group, meeting on a quarterly basis. MEG is chaired by the Safeguarding Service Manager, and is attended by Head of Public Protection, Community & Partnerships Manager, Crime & Disorder Officer, Community Cohesion Manager, YOS and Saint Giles.

A key area of focus for the MEG partnership will be the 'transitional' period of young people moving into adulthood.

SAFEGUARDING IN SCHOOLS:

Monmouthshire has adopted a proactive approach to responding to issues of sexual harassment in schools and has worked with colleagues from other agencies, coordinated by the VAWDASV team, to promote a Whole School Approach. The Safeguarding Lead in Education, Heather Heaney represented

Monmouthshire on the Welsh Government task group that is developing the **Peer on peer sexual harassment in education settings multi-agency action plan**. Schools continue to support this area of work. We continue to scope what issues are being raised within the school settings and use the information to provide targeted support where this is required.

There is a bullying prevention group established in MCC.

Resources continue to be coordinated in order to respond to pupil wellbeing issues across schools. The increase in wellbeing concerns being raised by pupils may be related to the last couple of years – we work collaboratively with our partner agencies in order to provide the most appropriate support when concerns are identified.

The SHRN (School Health Research Network) report is being evaluated by a task and finish group in the Autumn term to identify areas of concern and to inform how we support learners. The report includes areas such as Emotions and Behaviour, School connectedness, Sleep, Friendship and bullying, Sexting, Body image etc so this will be a valuable exercise.

Multi Agency Meetings [MAMs] are school based that are attended by Building Stronger Families Team [BSFT], Young Carers, School Based Counselling and other partners across the pre statutory system; they operate in three of the four secondary schools in Monmouthshire and are used to consider what support can be offered to pupils identified as vulnerable.

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EARLY HELP:

The Early Help Panel (now known as Space Wellbeing) Neuro Development Pathway Panel and Space Wellbeing Steering Group remains in place. SPACE Well-being (Single Point of Access for Children's Emotional Well-being) is a panel that receives referrals from agencies and families for a range of support for children's emotional well-being. PCHMSS (Primary Care Mental Health Support Services) and CAMHS (Children Adolescent Mental Health Services) both take referrals from this panel, as well as FIT, Platform, BSFT, Flying Start, Acorn, SHIFT and others. The Neuro Developmental Panel takes referrals for ASD/ADHD and other ND issues, rather than general wellbeing concerns.

There has been significant increases with referrals being received by these Panels; during January to March 2022, the highest number of referrals have been received to date, standing at 303. During this period the waiting list from referrals have also drastically increased as a result, with a two to three week time to process referrals before getting to Panel stage. Consideration is being given to the processing of referrals and whether or not this is due to a system issue or whether it is attributed to the significant increase of referrals.

Early Help Panel is supported by the advice line, which is staffed every day; calls to the advice line are steady, with an average of 134 calls per quarter over the last 12 months. The advice line supports in enquiries for both Panels; the advice line remains under development with huge potential.

Interface is a weekly meeting between service areas that consider families at a 'step down' level, which includes Family Intervention Team [FIT], Dads Can, Building Stronger Families Team [BFST], Family Group Conference / Mediation. This meeting manages moves between pre and post statutory services.

PREVENTATIVE APPROACHES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

We continued to analyse and monitor the impact of Covid-19 on families and communities to ensure that services are in place to respond to increased risk and vulnerability. As a result, there has been the development of the Wellbeing Team that has created a central point of contact to signpost, advise and support members of the public during Covid. The Wellbeing Team has been Covid focussed, adapting to the changing needs as the pandemic was evolving. The future of this team will remain community focussed and need-led.

HOUSING:

Monmouthshire continues to utilise approaches towards Homelessness through strengthened homeless prevention, increasing homeless accommodation and enhancing specialist service provision for young people and offenders.

As part of the homeless prevention approach, Housing and Communities undertook a staff restructure to create additional staffing capacity, with regards to prevention. The staffing restructure also facilitated dedicated staff to acquiring homeless accommodation; as a result there has been an increase in the number of properties provided through Monmouthshire Lettings and in this year there has been more social housing available to let for homeless applicants than the previous year. There has been the introduction of Housing First to support housing. Self-contained emergency family accommodation has now been established, which Monmouthshire are now looking to purchase. In relation to young people, with the highest needs and who are at risk of homelessness, there has been a remodelling of Pobl young person's accommodation, which includes four units of self-contained move-on accommodation. Young people with lower identified needs are being considered as part of a proposal for a dedicated, shared housing in Chepstow being established with MoYo floating support.

LOCAL SAFEGUARDING NETWORKS

The Local Safeguarding Network (LSN) meetings and Safeguarding Practitioner Forums have continued and are a multi-agency mechanism for professional leads to share information regarding safeguarding matters and extend knowledge of safeguarding activity and services across the Council.

LSNs were held in July 21, September 21, January 22, and March 22. Presentations included in these sessions were;

Young People's Gambling Harm Prevention Programme

N-Gage Services

DBS Presentation

Exploitation and Vulnerability Presentation

Horizons Sexual Violence Presentation

Older Persons Awareness Raising Cyfannol Women's Aid

Cyfle Cymru Presentation

Safer Wales Presentation

Phoenix DAS Presentation

In May 2021 a Practitioner Event was held on line, and this included the topics of;

Wellbeing

Moral Distress

Children and Young People's rights

Professional Curiosity

Suicide and Self Harm

Why Language Matters

Assessing child neglect and its social nature

ANALYSIS:

As the Covid pandemic has continued the identification and establishment of additional services have been provided across the Council, such as the Wellbeing Team, the NRM pilot, Homeless prevention and the continuation of the **Early Help Panel**, however, due to the significant increase of referrals, this has meant a delay in services being offered and as a result impacting on services and families. As a result the score has decreased from 5 to 4.

Prevention and partnership working remains a key focus for the Council and there remains a consistent drive for developing these approaches; there continues to be a strong multi agency approach in supporting families and the community to ensure the issues that impact on the vulnerable individuals and communities are addressed.

KEY STRENGTHS:

- Prevention and partnership working remains a key focus for the Council
- There remains a consistent drive for developing these approaches
- Continued strong multi-agency approach in supporting families and the community to ensure the issues that impact on the vulnerable individuals and communities are addressed

NEXT STEPS:

- Development of VAWDASV refresher course for all staff and to be rolled out across the Council
- There will continue to be promotion of all mandatory training across the Local Authority to be completed by staff members
- Further exploration around the waiting time for the **Early Help Panel**
- Remainder of Directorates to be included in Modern Day Slavery training
- Wellbeing Team to continue to develop to support the community in ensuring robust support and effective links with services are provided based on the changing needs of the community
- Wellbeing Team to evaluate the effectiveness of their support to inform future decisions about the Team

4. ROBUST PROTECTION

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4

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:

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK:

Partnership working has been further strengthened following the launch of the multi-agency Hub [January 2021]. This period has seen the Hub develop, with additional agencies becoming part of the

model to improve communication and make collaborative decisions to safeguard children and adults at risk.

Monthly delivery group meetings are held to discuss progress of the Hub, which then feeds into the Partnership Board attended by Heads of Service.

Gwent Police are commissioning an external review of the Hub which is out for tender in Summer 2022. As part of this evaluation, the Missing Children's Protocol will also be considered; the establishment of the safeguarding Hubs has provided an opportunity to integrate the resources and processes of the Gwent Missing Children Team to make a new resource model for missing children. The protocol has been continually reviewed every six weeks with plans for it to be relaunched in April 2022. This evaluation is being overseen by the Gwent Safeguarding Board.

There have been no adult or child practice reviews held in regards to Monmouthshire cases during this period.

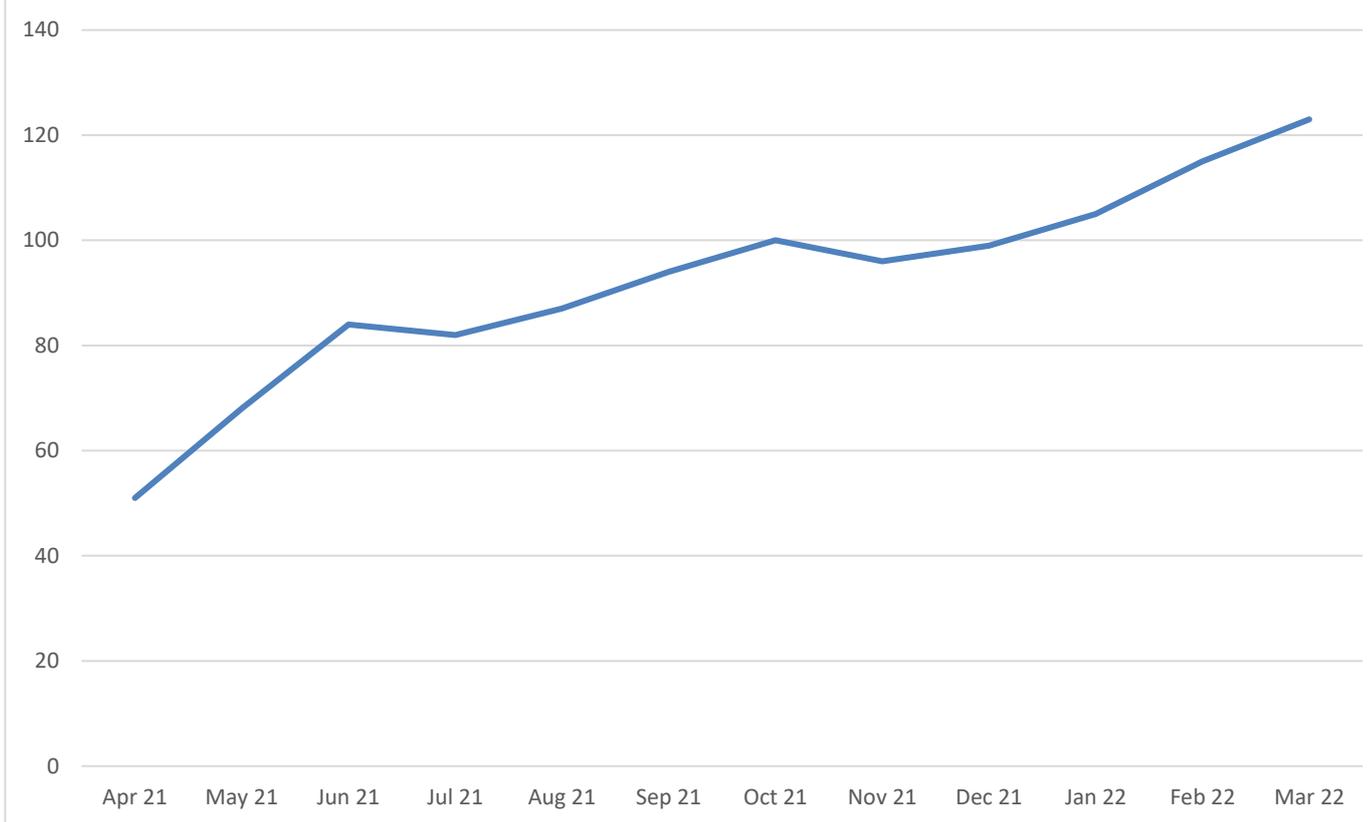
CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

The Care and Support Plan [CASP] agenda is deeply rooted into the Early Help and Assessment Team, with evidence of 300 children and families being supported during this time-period. Though an evaluation of this process there is evidence that these cases receive support in a timely manner and the cases are transferred to the Family Support and Protection Team after a period of three months for continued support and monitoring.

During this period there has been a rise in the number of children on Monmouthshire's Child Protection Register, with data informing us that the children are remaining on the Child Protection Register longer to ensure the Child Protection Plan is completed in its entirety and the risks to the children have significantly reduced. A Quality Assurance Report undertaken by the Child protection Coordinator, every 6 months, showed there has been an increase in meaningful child protection work, which has reduced the need to issue Court proceedings.

At year end the number of children on the child protection register was **123** (a significant increase from previous year end of 60), however, the following graph will demonstrate the movement of the child protection registration:

CP Monthly Figures April 21 to March 22



We continue to strive to improve the performance in Child protection Core groups and statutory visits.

This period has seen the introduction of a new Child Protection Co-ordinator, with the role having been covered by an independent agency for nearly 12 months.

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. At 31/03/22 the number of children looked after was **208** (from 213).

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, safeguarding reports were made concerning 528 adults.

The service is committed to the improvement of completion of the Section 126 adult protection enquiries within the statutory timeframe of 7 days. Work has been ongoing with all professionals involved in the adult safeguarding process to understand the importance of undertaking these enquiries in a timely manner. This has been evidenced in 65.5% of cases (compared to 51.1% last year). This will continue to be a focus in the forthcoming year.

An Adult Safeguarding dashboard continues to be in development to help monitor and analyse adult safeguarding activity. This will now also include management oversight development to ensure the quality assurance for adult safeguarding cases, in particular for case closures.

Regional adult co-ordinators group is attended on a bi-monthly basis to ensure streamline responses across Gwent.

The Adult Safeguarding Unit has been impacted by staffing issues, in pivotal positions of Team Manager, Adult Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Business Support Office; this has resulted in increased workloads and the need for re-prioritisation with cases. However, the Safeguarding Unit has continued

to maintain the day to day functions of Adult Safeguarding through the overall oversight and support from the Safeguarding Service Manager and the assistance of the Child Protection Co-ordinator. As the Child protection Coordinator has significant experience in Adult Safeguarding, this was utilised with case discussions and supervision in a time of staff shortage.

ANALYSIS:

The Council continues to ensure we provide the most robust protection for children and adults at risk of harm.

KEY STRENGTHS:

- Continued multi-agency working, which has strengthened communication across partner agencies
- Ongoing commitment to improving the quality of practice with key focus on development and training for practitioners
- Continue to monitor and evaluate all processes and protocols to ensure effective safeguarding that is streamlined regionally
- Continued development and partnership working within the Hub; with commitment to introducing further agencies, including YOS, IDVA and preventative services

The longer term impact of Covid has resulted in a greater volume and complexities of Duty to Reports in both children and adult services, however, there remains ongoing commitment to improving the quality of practice and the development of robust safeguarding plans, through practitioner training, multi-agency working and the continued evaluation of processes / models, such as the Hub and is the reason for the increase of score from 3 to 4.

NEXT STEPS:

- The Hub will be evaluated following successful tender at the end of Summer 2022, which is being commissioned by Gwent Police
- Continue to expand the Hub to include further agencies
- Continued improvement of the Section 126 enquiries being held within time-scale through further discussion with other professionals and agencies, such as Health
- Review of chair's checklist to consider timeliness of core group meetings and statutory visits for children on the Child Protection Register; to ensure effective quality assurance
- Bi-annual workshops to be held to review the effectiveness of practice and processes, which will include all Children's Services teams and the Safeguarding Unit

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:

Social Care and Health have clear operating processes in place, which ensures a robust approach for all Social Care commission for Children and Adults. This is evidenced by progress with completion of the rolling SAFE programme. The SAFE roll-out 2021-23 is very much in progress and has been co-

ordinated by a Business Support Manager, where we have taken a staged approach offering focussed time to service areas in order to provide robust quality assurance.

There has been strong multi agency working between Safeguarding and Commissioning in the Escalating Concerns process, which has been actioned for one care home during this period. The Escalating Concerns process provides a clear action plan to provide safety for all residents and identifies areas of improvement.

Schools and other parts of the Council working with children / adults at risk indicate there are robust arrangements in place, which includes individual school contracts, transport and leisure services. Service areas within the Council are able to identify their links within the Safeguarding Unit; there is evidence of regular communication, advice and guidance. There is open communication with the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Officer from Corporate service areas, which quickly highlights any issues or concerns to ensure they are addressed immediately and appropriately. Monthly risk assessment meetings are also held between Safeguarding and the Passenger Transport Unit to discuss any Safeguarding issues and ensure there is a collective and prompt approach to DBS risk assessments.

There is evidence of Safeguarding embedded in Licensing services and the Public Protection Unit; Good partnership working is shown within the Responsible Authority meetings, which were re-launched in January 2022 following suspension during Covid. A significant development for licencing within this period has resulted in DBS checks now being required every six months for drivers, rather than every 3 years. This will also include Operators who have access to book records or despatch vehicles; this was implemented on October 2021.

A Service Level Agreement was finalised in March 2022 for MonLife, to look at commissioning services for activities with children and young people. The SLA was put together to ensure consistency across MonLife services whilst ensuring compliancy with audit and MCC financial procedures; H&S processes and of course Safeguarding processes. The SLA is robust and transparent, and the service commissioned must present all paperwork and copies of certificates prior to starting any work or engaging with children/young people. The SLA can be used for a day provision or a regular provision.

The review process enables any concerns to be raised by both parties and to ensure they are worked through and resolved. It also ensures we are compliant with MCC regulations and processes. Service leads assisted in the formulation of the document so co-own and understand its importance.

COMMISSIONING:

During the April 21-March 22 period Commissioning restarted their quality assurance processes following standard monitoring being suspended in the early stages of the pandemic. Outside of the pandemic, Local Authority providers receive an annual monitoring visit, and in the case of larger providers, 1-2 relationship visits are undertaken per year. For children's services much of the monitoring is done at desktop level due to services being individual and out of county, however, in person visits are completed where necessary and where placements are in county.

When visits restarted resources were prioritised based on services of concern, with other providers receiving informal visits initially. Commissioning are now back to normal capacity and working with most providers having received their annual monitoring visits if relevant or visits were scheduled.

During the April 21-March 22 period there was one Older Adult Care Home in Escalating Concerns due to concerns around leadership and management, staffing and quality of care. This provider has, subsequent to this period, improved significantly and is now being supported through Provider Performance. One other nursing home received support via the commissioning Provider Performance process due to concerns around leadership and clinical skills at the home; this provider is now out of this process.

In terms of other adult provision, there were no other services in formal processes, however, there is an ongoing theme across the sector related to staff recruitment and retention which at times has and is

impacting care quality. Providers continue to work with Commissioning and other partners, as well as internally to mitigate this risk as far as possible.

During the early part of the April 21 period there was one children's placement in Provider Performance; this was an out of county bespoke placement. The individual entered adulthood in April 21 and moved to a different placement.

VOLUNTEERING:

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy and Volunteering Policy sets out clear guidelines and expectations for volunteers in commissioned services; this is reflected in the Wellbeing Team. There are two strands to the Wellbeing service; the first is preventative, which was created to provide pandemic support but since the end of March 2022 has moved its focus to Ukraine support

Volunteers working for the Council, including within schools, will be subject to the same recruitment processes as the paid workforce and according to the nature of the activity being undertaken.

Safeguarding will be covered within the initial induction. Volunteers must subsequently attend the level of safeguarding training relevant to the nature of the voluntary activity being undertaken.

In addition, Training records will be held centrally with the Talent Lab. It is the responsibility of the individual employee to inform their Manager, who should update the Talent Lab.

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.

The evaluative score has increased from a 3 to a 4:

- The SAFE process is now fully co-ordinated and has a more robust and effective quality assurance oversight
- Relationships between Safeguarding and Commissioning have strengthened
- Monthly risk assessment meetings with Passenger Transport Unit have proved invaluable
- Responsible Authority meetings have been re-established, following a period of absence due to Covid and are being held on a monthly basis
- Any Licensing issues or themes within the community are being discussed at the Responsible Authority meeting
- Licensing have also changed their process for DBS renewals to every six months and will also include vehicle proprietors and operators

KEY NEXT STEPS FOR 2022 – 2023:

- To further strengthen the working relationship between Safeguarding and Commissioning for both Children and Adults and also include better attendance at meetings.
- Commissioning to review services on provider list and provider feedback.
- Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority.
- Continued support to Directorates to ensure the SAFE process is completed to a high standard and considers Safeguarding aspects until the end of roll out in 2023.

- Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.

APPENDIX 3

SAFEGUARDING CURRENT ACTIVITY PLAN (2022 – 2023):

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
GOOD GOVERNANCE		
Complete SAFE process (2021 – 2023)	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023
Development / implementation of core data set for WASG including comparative data	Safeguarding Unit WASG	March 2023
Review Corporate Safeguarding Policy to be ratified and disseminated	Safeguarding Unit	Dec 2022
SAFE WORKFORCE		
Ongoing development of 'Thinqi' to ensure training records are centrally managed	Systems and Data Team	March 2023
Training Policy needs to look at mandatory training and consider other areas that need to be recorded, including VAWDSV, Prevent and GDPR	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023
Continued development for the delivery of Level 1 training	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront	Systems and Data Team	March 2023
To further aid the efficiency and management of Practitioner Concerns, a model is being developed on Flo / Plant to ensure appropriate safeguards are put in place. This will be GDPR compliant	Safeguarding Unit Performance Team	December 2022
Regional Safeguarding Leads will continue to meet to review the Practitioner Concerns process and review the effectiveness of the "outcomes" of the process	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2023
Training to be developed around understanding of Practitioner Concerns, for those who are employers and those who are at greater risk of being discussed in the arena, eg Education, Foster Carers and Health professionals	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2023
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH		
Development of VAWDASV refresher course for all staff and to be rolled out across the Council	Training Unit	March 2023
There will continue to be promotion of all mandatory training across the Local Authority to be completed by staff members	Training Unit Workforce Development Team	March 2023
Further exploration around the waiting time for the Early Help Panel	Service Manager, Wellbeing and Family Support	March 2023
Remainder of Directorates to be included in Modern Day Slavery training	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023

Wellbeing Team to continue to develop to support the community in ensuring robust support and effective links with services are provided based on the changing needs of the community	Wellbeing Team	March 2023
Wellbeing Team to evaluate the effectiveness of their support to inform future decisions about the Team	Wellbeing Team	March 2023
ROBUST PROTECTION		
The Hub will be evaluated following successful tender at the end of Summer 2022, which is being commissioned by Gwent Police	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Police	March 2023
Continue to expand the Hub to include further agencies	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023
Continued improvement of the Section 126 enquiries being held within time-scale through further discussion with other professionals and agencies, such as Health	Safeguarding Unit [Adult] Health Safeguarding	March 2023
Review of chair's checklist to consider timeliness of core group meetings and statutory visits for children on the Child Protection Register; to ensure effective quality assurance	Safeguarding Unit	December 2022
Bi-annual workshops to be held to review the effectiveness of practice and processes, which will include all Children's Services teams and the Safeguarding Unit	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023
SAFE SERVICES		
To further strengthen the working relationship between Safeguarding and Commissioning for both Children and Adults and also include better attendance at meetings.	Safeguarding Unit Commissioning	March 2023
Commissioning to review services on provider list and provider feedback.	Commissioning	March 2023
Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023
Continued support to Directorates to ensure the SAFE process is completed to a high standard and considers Safeguarding aspects until the end of roll out in 2023.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023
Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.	Safeguarding Unit All Directorates	March 2023

APPENDIX 4

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2022 ACTION PLAN:

GREEN – Completed

AMBER – In Progress, continuing

RED – Delayed, not started,

BLUE no longer required / changed

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>	<u>RAG</u>	<u>Comment</u>
GOOD GOVERNANCE				
Implement next SAFE process (2021 – 2023)	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023	AMBER	Ongoing rolling process
Evaluate learning and outcomes process and ensure this informs future planning	Safeguarding Unit and WASG	March 2023	AMBER	Ongoing rolling process
Development / implementation of core data set for WASG including comparative data	Safeguarding Unit WASG	Sept 2021	RED	Priorities and competing demands operationally was the reason for delay
Review Corporate Policy to integrate and update in light of COVID	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022	GREEN	
Ensure new duty to report forms are implemented and embedded across the council	Safeguarding Unit / WASG	Sept 2021	GREEN	
SAFE WORKFORCE				
Continue to monitor progress in how the council centrally records mandatory training data	People's Services	March 2022	AMBER	Ongoing with plans to further develop
Revise the safeguarding training strategy so that it reflects developments in digital training options	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022	RED	Delayed due to National Training Framework being implemented
Further develop directorate sufficiency for the delivery of Level 1 training	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022	AMBER	Ongoing

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		Successfully achieved
Continue to monitor progress in how the council centrally records mandatory training data	People's Services	March 2022		Ongoing
Revise the safeguarding training strategy so that it reflects developments in digital training options	Safeguarding Unit	March 2022		Ongoing
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH				
Work to resolve the issues around being able to report and monitor VAWDASV training across the council.	Partnership People's Services	March 2022		Ongoing
Ensure full roll-out of the Modern Day Slavery protocol across the council	MEG / Safeguarding Unit	Jan 2022		Ongoing; delays due to Covid
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		Ongoing due to implementation of the Wellbeing Team, who will continue to review this
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		This continues to be an ongoing consideration
Continue to develop the Community Support Network approach with communities.	Partnerships	September 2022		Ongoing
ROBUST PROTECTION				
Evaluate the outcomes and impact of the Safeguarding Hub	Safeguarding Unit	Sept 2022		External commissioned service to review
Continue to assess and respond to the risks related to the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19	SCH	March 2022		Ongoing; delayed due to Covid

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		Ongoing; part of Adult Safeguarding action plan
Improve performance in child protection core groups and statutory visits	Children's Services	March 2022		Ongoing
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		Ongoing; rolling programme

APPENDIX 5

SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT:



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