



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

**1. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is:

- To evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2022 / 2023, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2023 - 2024.
- 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:**

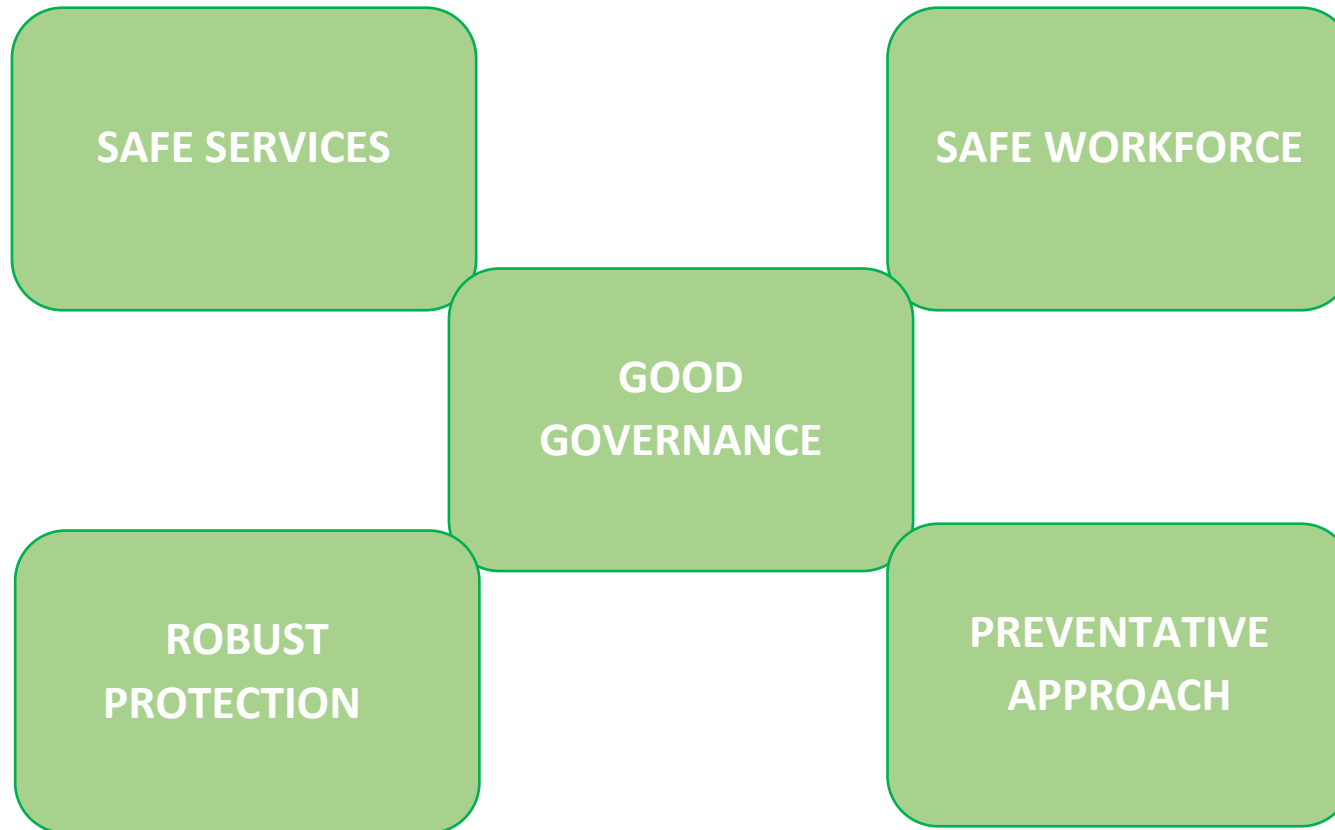
- For members to scrutinise the Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report and Activity prior to its presentation at Council in November 2023.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

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.

- 3.1** 2022-2023 was a period of time which saw the Local Authority move away from the COVID restrictions as the pandemic subsided. As services within the council moved to less restrictions and a "new normal" there was a refocus on disrupted service development. Disrupted services included the commission of Thinqi, training and the development of the core data set.

**THE CORNERSTONES OF SAFEGUARDING IN MONMOUTHSHIRE:**



- 3.2** 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.
- 3.3** 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 [see *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:**

CORNERSTONE	April – Sept 2017	Oct 2017 – March 2018	April 2018 – March 2019	April 2019 – March 2020	April 2020 – March 2021	April 2021 – March 2022	April 2022 – March 2023
GOOD GOVERNANCE	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
SAFE WORKFORCE	3	4	3	3	4	4	4
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH	3	4	4	4	5	4	4
ROBUST PROTECTION	4	4	4	3	3	4	4
SAFE SERVICES	2	3	3	3	4	4	4

- 3.4** Priority improvement actions arising from the evaluation form the basis of the action plan which is implemented and monitored through the WASG [see *Appendix 2*]. The review of the previous year's action plan is at *Appendix 3*.

**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:**

- 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 [WASG]  
Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

Scrutiny Committee [14 November 2023]

The report was scrutinised by a joint meeting of Performance and Overview and People Scrutiny committees. Members questioned the decrease in the number of child exploitation cases and requested a workshop with the Police to gain a fuller understanding of how the Council and the Police work in partnership. They suggested it would be helpful to hear children's voices within the report for next year and asked that the report examine the link between young adults leaving the care system and older age homelessness. They also recommended peer evaluation is undertaken to give greater objectivity to performance assessment.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

[Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#)

**11. AUTHOR:**

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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**

<b>SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5</b>	
<b><u>WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?</u></b>	
<p>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.</p>	
<b>ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>There is evidence of strong links between the Safeguarding Unit and other Directorates, showing safeguarding is rooted within Monmouthshire’s core business. This is assisted through positive working relationships, regular WASG meetings and discussions showing how safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, with an on-going commitment to training and implementing safeguarding priority actions.</p> <p>There has been a change in political leadership for the council which led to a change in Social Care Leader from Cllr Penny Jones to Cllr Tudor Thomas; however, safeguarding has remained a key priority for the whole council.</p> <p>For these reasons our self-assessment score remains at 5.</p>	
<b>KEY STRENGTHS:</b>	<b>NEXT STEPS:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safeguarding Audit Framework Evaluation has been completed and has identified areas for further improvement.</li> <li>- Continuous positive relationships between Safeguarding Unit and Directorates through WASG and ongoing advice and guidance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SAFEs roll out 2023 – 2025.</li> <li>- Regional SAFE to be implemented and points from previous roll out to be built upon for better efficiency.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Committed participation from Monmouthshire Safeguarding Unit in Safeguarding Board Groups and subgroups, this influences and shapes regional plans, which impact upon local practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporate Safeguarding Policy to reviewed when updates arise i.e. the National Safeguarding Training Framework 2023/4 and Modern Day Slavery Statement.</li> <li>- Data set for WASG used as a meaningful tool in WASG to identify key themes.</li> <li>- Council election which took place on 05.05.22 meant change in Social Care Leader to labour member Tudor Thomas. Consideration for further training and understanding of safeguarding priorities.</li> </ul>
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**PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:**

**SAFEGUARDING AUDIT FRAMEWORK EVALUATION [SAFE]:**

The Safeguarding Audit Framework Evaluation [SAFE] is as self-assessment tool, related to safeguarding standards, which requires each service area to consider their own practices and procedures within their relevant setting.

SAFE roll out 2021-2023 has been completed.

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

For this programme 101 SAFE requests were sent out across the council, this includes 35 schools, 1 PRS, and 26 early learning settings.

Analysis of 2021-23 SAFE role completion

- There were initial challenges in identifying service structures / diagrams, to inform which teams sit in which service area. There needs to be clearer identification of safeguarding lead / point of contact / which service requires SAFE, and who is Nil return. It is anticipated with SharePoint roll out details of clear Service Area information may assist for next round of SAFE. Those who returned with Nil return were reviewed by the Safeguarding Unit and it agreed this was an appropriate response.
- The gradual distribution of SAFE completion to service areas helped with focus and organisation, however, not all directorates submitted to timescales making it harder to stick to plan.
- Where the Safeguarding Unit offered face to face / Team meetings with individual services / DSL's SAFEs were completed jointly and to a high standard.
- People and Governance Directorate completed a joint SAFE covering- People Services (HR, Systems & Support), Training, Legal, Democratic Services, Emergency Planning, Culture. This went well and there should be consideration for any other opportunities for other directorates do this jointly and productively.
- Plans for next roll out include a further review of the system with greater responsibility on directorate leads to manage SAFEs with the support of the safeguarding unit and implementation of new Regional SAFE.

#### **SAFEGUARDING CORPORATE POLICY:**

The Safeguarding Corporate Policy was updated during this period, to include recognition of new legislation within 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. The Corporate Policy was presented at Full Council October 2022 and agreed. This will be reviewed in 3 years time.

#### **GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD [GSB]:**

Monmouthshire is rooted into the Gwent Safeguarding Board and plays a significant role in regional safeguarding developments. There is prominent representation of Monmouthshire on the Gwent Safeguarding board with Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer Social Care & Health being co-chair of the Board and Diane Corrister, Head of Childrens Services, and Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adults Services representing Monmouthshire.

The Gwent Safeguarding Board [GSB] is supported in their work by a number of subgroups 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 / subgroups to deliver the specified outcomes and in addition maintain good links into the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [VAWDASV] Board.

### **WHOLE AUTHORITY SAFEGUARDING GROUP [WASG]**

The Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] has continued to meet on a digital platform. The group continues to ensure that corporate Safeguarding has oversight at a senior level. All Directorate Leads are invited to participate at bimonthly meetings. These meetings identify safeguarding concerns and themes so that the council can take a strategic and coordinated approach.

### **CORE DATA SET:**

The Data set was agreed by WASG, this is the data which informs the Authority of their progress against their safeguarding priorities.

## **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.

<b>ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>The score remains at 4 as we have continued strong arrangements regarding Monmouthshire’s safe recruitment and an appropriately trained workforce. Under the Corporate Safeguarding Policy, Safe Recruitment remains a priority where there are good processes and systems in place, which are continually reviewed and monitored to ensure that safe recruitment practice is followed. There is a clear process in place to respond to and manage any concerns raised about professionals / practitioners working with children or adults at risk (known as practitioner concerns).</p> <p>Digital approaches to support training continue to be developed and there is ongoing commitment to this with the launch of Thingi. This means people in the council have the right level of safeguarding training, which is regularly updated. A workforce that is trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of safeguarding concerns and know how to respond helps keeps our citizens safe.</p> <p>We have retained the score at 4 because the new learning management system that will assist with safeguarding training is at an early stage of implementation.</p>	
<b>KEY STRENGTHS:</b>	<b>NEXT STEPS:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuous priority given to safe recruitment practice.</li> <li>- SWAY E-learning has provided a strong Level 1 training forum across Directorates with continued quality assurance and support from the Safeguarding Unit.</li> <li>- Thingi has been launched within the social care directorate, although very much in its infancy needs to be embedded within the council.</li> <li>- As part of the Practitioner Concerns process, ongoing review of the person’s employment status is undertaken, eg redeployment, suspension or reassigned other duties.</li> <li>- Greater improvement in communication with Adult Safeguarding Team Manager and Child Protection Co-ordinator regarding advice / threshold / actions / referrals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Thingi” to be embedded within all areas of the council.</li> <li>- National Training Standards to be considered from a Monmouthshire perspective. Consideration to adopt this national framework.</li> <li>- Regional Safeguarding Leads will continue to meet to review the Practitioner Concerns process and review the effectiveness of the “outcomes” of the process.</li> <li>- Gwent Safeguarding Board have developed guidance around Practitioner Concerns and are looking to develop guidance for employers and for those who are vulnerable to having allegations made against them.</li> <li>- Gwent Safeguarding Board has identified that the Safer Recruitment Policy is due for review during this next period so a</li> </ul>

	Task & Finish group will be set up, which will include the Child Protection Co-ordinator.
<p><b><u>PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:</u></b></p> <p><b>TRAINING:</b></p> <p>There remains a high priority within the Council for safe recruitment practices. 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. Monmouthshire is 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.</p> <p>Thinqi is a learning management system that Monmouthshire County Council have commissioned and will be migrating to during 23-24. Thinqi is a platform that will support the delivery and monitoring of safeguarding training moving forward. Each employee will be need to complete mandatory safeguarding training that is appropriate and relevant to their role. This learning will be available in a variety of formats including e-learning, face to face training sessions, practice exchange, case reviews and digital learnings such as podcasts, webinars and videos to ensure there is an opportunity for all people to engage in learning that is suited to their learning style and requirements. Compliance with the required learning will be monitored and managed via Thinqi and working with all teams to optimise safeguarding in Monmouthshire.</p> <p>The Safeguarding Policy shows the levels of current training required; however, this has not been revised as the National Training Standards were being drawn up after a regional multi agency period of consultation. October 2022 saw the launch of the new Welsh National Safeguarding Training Standards. The aim of these standards is to ensure people are safeguarded in our communities through the delivery of appropriate safeguarding training that is consistent across Wales. Monmouthshire County Council will be working over the next financial year to consider how they may wish to adopt this training framework to support safeguarding locally.</p> <p>Level 1 safeguarding training is predominantly undertaken via a Sway, with quality assurance and support being offered by the Safeguarding Unit. Some service areas require face to face Level 1 safeguarding training for their workforce, which is delivered in this format when required to ensure support is given to all learners and optimise safeguarding in our communities.</p>	

Mon Life and individual schools undertake their own Level 1 Safeguarding Training. Level 1 is hugely successful and remains the primary training. 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. 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 are in place to move this back face to face when possible.

### **DISCLOSURE BARRING SERVICE [DBS]:**

We have systems and processes in place, that work alongside our People Services' policies to ensure all new recruits who require a DBS check have the check undertaken prior to commencing work with the Authority. It is the responsibility of the individual to renew their DBS check when required for their professional registration purposes.

People Services have reported a fast turnover of DBS checks, which means that new staff are able to enter their posts quickly, all of which supports a more efficient workforce ensuring appropriate services are continually offered. There was a slight delay in DBS checks being completed following the influx of DBS applications for Ukrainian hosts, but this settled down and is no longer causing any delays for Monmouthshire.

### **PRACTITIONER CONCERNS / ALLEGATIONS:**

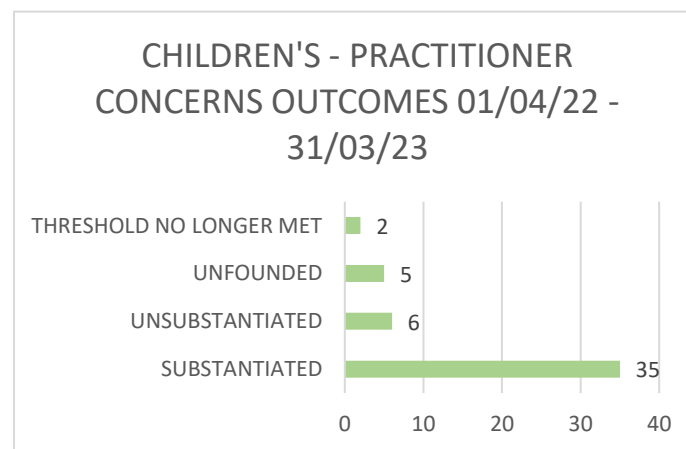
Monmouthshire's Safeguarding Unit has overall responsibility for the management of the Practitioner Concerns / People in a Position of Trust process. A practitioner concern is when an allegation is made against a person working in a position of trust, either in their personal or professional life. These procedures set out arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns about those whose work, either in a paid or voluntary capacity, which brings them into contact with children or adults at risk. 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.

### **PRACTITIONER CONCERNS:**

#### **Children's:**

The Practitioner Concerns Process has remained consistent busy throughout this period. There appears greater awareness from practitioners in identifying the need for consideration for this process to be instigated as early as possible to ensure safeguards are implemented at the earliest opportunity. There has been good communication and decision-making regarding risks being identified and the most appropriate investigation is agreed. This has resulted in 73% of cases concluding with the Substantiated outcome.

During 01/04/22 – 31/03/23 the Unit held Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings about **74** practitioners, relating to **105** children following practitioner allegations. During the same period **48** Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings were concluded.



Practitioner Concerns allegation referrals come from a range of referral sources.

**Adults:**

The Practitioner Concerns Process has been reviewed and updated so it is consistent across Adults / Children's services. This includes accuracy of record keeping and consistency in terms of how Practitioner Concerns are approached. This has been achieved through better communication and building links between adult safeguarding and the wider council.

In both Adults and Children's Services, there has been a significant amount of delay around Police investigations impacting on timescales for the conclusion of the Practitioner Concerns process. Whilst the majority of cases are concluded within 1 month, sometimes 2, there has been an occasion where this is longer, with the longest period of time a Police investigation has taken has been **20 months**, followed by **14** months. This has an impact on the wider council workforce as suspensions creates vulnerabilities for resources and financial pressures on services. Within the safeguarding unit there is consistency around discussions regarding suspension being the last option. Consideration around redeployment is explored, along with other financial constraints and the impact on the individual's emotional wellbeing.

Children and adults Practitioner Concerns / Allegations are managed via a tracker, which identifies the status of each case, including what investigation is required, and the outcome of each process. This is reviewed monthly by the Safeguarding Unit with the view to prevent drift, recognising the impacts this has on wider employment issues within the council. The primary cause of drift has been identified due to the length of time police take to conclude criminal investigations. This has been escalated at a local and regional level as the council workforce are impacted upon such delays.

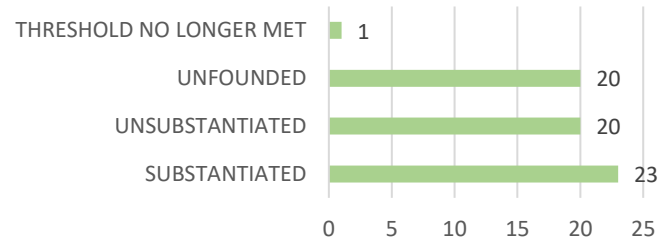
The Safeguarding Unit members work closely together to ensure consistent thresholds and provide resilience between children and adults Practitioner Concerns. Contact logs have been created with Quality Assurance undertaken by the Safeguarding Service Manager. There is more effective communication with agencies to include the conclusion of the process.

Regionally there are ongoing Task and Finish groups taking place to explore and review the effectiveness of the Practitioner Concerns meetings, with an attempt to streamline them nationally.

During 01/04/22 – 31/03/23 the Unit held Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings about **60 cases**. However these sometimes included multiple-practitioners or service users, or multiple allegations within each occurrence. During the same period, **53** Professional Concern cases were concluded.



ADULTS - PRACTITIONER  
CONCERNS OUTCOMES 01/04/22 -  
31/03/23



**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.

**ANALYSIS**

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. Scoring has remained a 4 due to continued demand pressures across preventative services, nevertheless prevention and partnership collaborations remain strong.

**KEY STRENGTHS:**

- Prevention and partnership working remains a key focus for the Council.
- Modern Day Slavery Statement when agreed will be key to all services throughout Monmouthshire, and there is commitment to this.
- Early Help no longer has a waiting list so preventative services can be put in place immediately when identified.
- LSN’s are engaging with presentations from a varied source, ensuring information is disseminated within Monmouthshire.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Wellbeing Team to continue 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.
- The Modern-Day slavery statement needs to be completed and embedded across the council.
- NRM pilot and change in threshold to be understood in greater depth.

**PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:****VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL ABUSE [VAWDASV]**

Monmouthshire remains committed to the prevention of Violence Against Woman and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [VAWDASV]. VAWDASV training is mandatory for all Elected Members and employees of the council, and this is incorporated into their induction with Monmouthshire. All of Monmouthshire County Council must complete Group 1 accessed via the HUB through an external link. The council has remained compliant with this with 171 completing group 1 Mandatory group 1 and 25 completing Ask & Act Training.

Once Resource Link has migrated to Thinqi all staff will be required to re-take the course, and then a refresher will be required every 2 years; Thinqi will prompt when refresher training is due.

**MULTI AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CO-ORDINATION [MARAC]:**

Monmouthshire are committed to supporting those at high risk of Domestic violence by attending Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC). The purpose of these meetings is for multi-agencies to discuss high risk domestic abuse cases and together develop a safety plan. MARAC is held on a fortnightly basis in Monmouthshire on a digital platform which promotes multi-agency attendance. The Chairing role is shared between Social Services and Police, alternating each fortnight. The number of cases discussed per month generally remains around 10-12. Of the 5 Gwent Local Authorities, Monmouthshire has the lowest number of cases discussed within the MARAC arena, which has remained the same for a significant period of time. In Monmouthshire, there are consistent attendees at MARAC to ensure thresholds are constant when screening appropriate referrals and formulating risk management plans.

Cases discussed at MARAC have risen to 159 [from 130 last year]. This increase mirrors an increase in National demand for MARAC, and regionally there are plans develop a MARAC Demand Management Plan.

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

**MODERN DAY SLAVERY:**

The Modern Day Slavery Protocol has been rolled out to Children's Services and introduced within Adult Teams, however, needs to be rolled out throughout the council. In addition to this training Childrens Services have received external training provided by the Police, which covers Exploitation, Modern Slavery, and the National Referral Mechanism [NRM] process.

**NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM [NRM]:**

The National Referral Mechanism is the UK system for officially recognising victims of trafficking where decisions were previously made by the Home Office. Due to delays in these cases being heard by the Home Office, a pilot was developed, which Monmouthshire has participated in. Monmouthshire continues to be part of a pilot scheme around responding to the NRM, which will continue to at least March 2024. The NRM pilot means that decisions about NRM threshold will be made by local Safeguarding partners, including Children's Services, Police and Health. There have been recent changes regarding the thresholds of decisions and training will be offered to members who sit on the panel to support with such changes. From April 2022 to March 2023, **49 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.

**EXPLOITATION:**

**There are 2 types of exploitation identified:**

**Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation**

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.

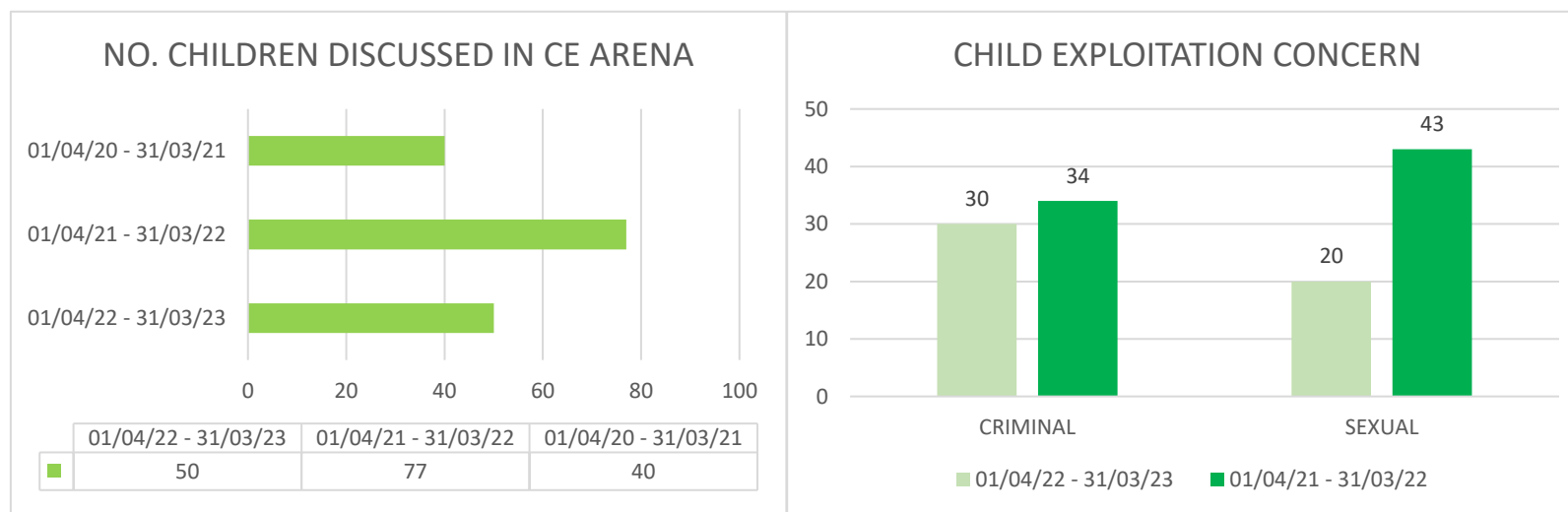
During **01/04/22 – 31/03/23**, 50 children [down from 61 children last year] were subject to Child Exploitation Meetings, where consideration is given for children to become part of a Gwent Police Operation named Quartz.

**Criminal x 30**

**Sexual x 20**

It is not uncommon for children to be at risk from both forms of exploitation, so when categorising these children, the most prominent risk is identified.

What has been noted during this period is that more males are being discussed, which is a change to previous years due to the recognition that Criminal Exploitation is on the increase. Over half of all children considered are at risk of criminal exploitation rather than sexual.



Although 1 child aged 10 has been discussed in this arena the majority of children are 16 years old. Children can remain open to Operation Quartz until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In addition to this, 8 MCC children were discussed as part of a number of Complex Strategy Meetings.

Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation [MASE] meetings take place every 2 months; these are well attended by partner agencies and continue to take place online via Teams. MASE is a strategic meeting which looks at disruption, perpetrators, places of interest and themes. In March 2023 a further developed MACE framework was implemented. The new framework specifies the information that each Agency should report, so the agenda refocused from primarily focusing on victims with a more balanced input under the VOLT headings [Victim, Offender, Location, Themes]. Gwent Police regularly provide the attached information re victims – and this is used by agencies to prepare their reports for MACE.

Monmouthshire Exploitation Group [MEG] continue to be held every quarter and is well represented by key partners from the council. 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 St Giles Trust, which is a charity using expertise and real-life past experiences to support people who are hard to engage.

MEG has also enabled the discussion of key locations of concern in the North of the borough, and safeguarding arrangements put in place to reduce harm from those most vulnerable in such locations. Locations of interest have been linked to educational provisions and temporary accommodation, including supported accommodation. Links between vulnerable children and risky adults have been identified through multi-agency information sharing, and then safeguarding plans put in place to proactively safeguard individuals. It should be noted that during this period most children identified of exploitation lived at home.

#### **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 Education Approach [WEA].

There has been a whole Education Response to VAWDASV Gwent Implementation Guide for Schools 2023- 2024. This document is designed to show how it fits (VAWDASV) and effects all areas of school life in some way.

The 9 key elements set out in the WEA offer a helpful guide and can be used as an action plan to help consider school provision and actions that may be helpful to consider to best support children and young people, staff and the whole community that may be affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

The Safeguarding Lead in Education represents 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. Monmouthshire continues to scope what issues are being raised within the school settings and use the information to provide targeted support where this is required.

A challenging bullying group (CBG) was established last year in Monmouthshire. A challenging Bullying Action Plan is the framework for the work of the group whose aim is to develop best practice in preventing and challenging bullying behaviours.

Resources continue to be coordinated in order to respond to pupil wellbeing issues across schools. There has been an 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 evaluated by a task and finish group 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 is a valuable exercise, and has made recommendations to address the issues raised.

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 are used to consider what support can be offered to pupils identified as vulnerable.

#### **PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EARLY HELP:**

SPACE Wellbeing and Family Support Panel (Single Point of Access for Children’s Emotional Wellbeing)

Monmouthshire SPACE Well-being and Family Support Panel is a process through which families and the professionals who work with them can seek early help and support on a wide range of issues that impact families. It brings together a range of services provided by Monmouthshire County Council, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and the Third Sector. Support through the panel can be accessed on parenting and family functioning, as well as children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing.

SPACE Well-being and Family Support Panel meets weekly. Its aim is to ensure children and their families get the right help, first time, at the right time. Working together, agencies who attend panel explore ways to provide families with support that suits their individual needs, which may be through a referral to a specific service who will work directly with the child and/or family or specialist staff offering guidance and support to professionals who are already working with the family.

Referral received into the Panel over the year were as follows:

Number of Panel Referrals – 01/04/22 – 31/0/23												
Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	TOTAL
109	153	109	76	63	113	151	108	91	110	134	128	<b>1345</b>

The total number of referrals has dropped by approximately 16% to 1345 from 1603 in 2021/2022. This drop in referrals could be attributed to families being able to return to a more stable routine coming out of the period impacted by the pandemic; as well as the introduction of a CAMHS In-Reach Service which provide consultation and support for schools regarding children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The number of referrals in school holidays naturally decline due to less referrals being submitted. 23% of our total referrals come from education. Whereas 41% of referrals come from GP’s, 16% of referrals are from internal professionals within Monmouthshire, for example, a Social Worker and 11% are self-referrals. There are a small number of referrals from third sector organisations and other health professionals.

There is currently no waiting list for referrals being processed for a Panel discussion. Steps taken to mitigate this is the appointment of an additional SPACE wellbeing Panel Administrator and the introduction of a Bring Back function. The Monmouthshire SPACE Wellbeing and Family



Support Panel facilitate a Bring Back function allowing Panel members to reconsider any referral/family where additional support is identified as being needed. These are then discussed at the next available Panel without the need for a new referral to be generated.

Previously the Panel were supported by the advice line who supported the processing of enquiries. This advice line has now developed into an Integrating Families and Communities Team (InFaCT) that work to help people navigate existing resources and also to come together to support each other and create community responses to local challenges. Our Family and Community Links Coordinators use their knowledge of existing services and their skills in building relationships with people to facilitate community solutions.

### **HOUSING:**

A Rapid Rehousing approach has been adopted by Monmouthshire Council with a 5-year transitional plan to take steps towards a Monmouthshire where homelessness is rare, brief, and unrepeatable. This plan cements previous work to increase the prevention of homelessness, minimise any time spent in temporary accommodation where homelessness cannot be prevented and to provide timely support at of the level and type required for households to maintain settled accommodation.

Prevention officers have been working with households identified as at risk of homelessness to provide support around affordability, property searches and landlord mediation. For the 2022-2023 financial year the overall Housing Options Team achieved a 50% prevention success rate.

This year Monmouthshire Housing Options Team has had the additional resource of a Discretionary Homelessness Prevention Fund. Applications can be made to the fund by both internal and external professionals as well as directly and are awarded where an injection of additional funds are likely to prevent homelessness, such as towards arrears or rent in advance/ deposits.

In a bid to reach households when housing issues are emerging to prevent homelessness the Housing Options and Strategy teams have worked with the Shared Benefits Service to develop a process to identify and refer households at risk of homelessness for further support. The Shared Benefit Service Award Discretionary Housing Payments to households to support with rent and so are often contacted by families at the beginning of their struggles with housing payments.

As part of the Rapid Rehousing plan Monmouthshire has been reaching out to partner agencies to look at ways of engaging with households that are experiencing housing related problems before it reaches a point of crisis. There are current plans to disseminate useful housing advice to every benefit claimant in Monmouthshire through the DWP.

For those where homelessness has not been preventable Monmouthshire Support Services continue to commission support services to meet the needs of vulnerable households. Particular focus has been on the need for specialist young person's provisions during 2022-2023. A new specialist young person's support service 'MOYO' was commissioned and became operational, and the housing team have also opened a young person's only temporary accommodation shared house.

Monmouthshire is also now part of the HMPPS CAS-3 scheme helping ex-offenders to access accommodation on release.

Monmouthshire Letting Service continues to try and attract landlords to lease properties to the council to be used as temporary accommodation for homeless households in B&B. There is work currently being undertaken to launch a campaign aimed at those who have additional properties with plans to unveil this in the early part of the 2023-2024 financial year. In addition to acquiring suitable accommodation through leasing Monmouthshire Housing and Communities team has been given the green light to purchase units of accommodation to use as temporary accommodation and officers are already looking to identify suitable properties.

#### **LOCAL SAFEGUARDING NETWORK:**

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 are well represented by representatives in all directorates and some members of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group. VAWDASV and voluntary organisations linked to Monmouthshire also attend, and this membership continues to be reviewed and extended where appropriate.

LSNs were held in July 2022, September 2022, January 2023, and March 2023. Presentations included in these sessions were:

- VAWDASV
- Ending Physical Punishment (pre-recorded)
- Missing People presentation

- Understanding medical examinations for child sexual abuse concerns (The CSA Centre) (pre-recorded)
- Adolescent Wellbeing Video & feedback
- Stop Loan Sharks Wales Presentation
- N-Gage Family Service Update

In May 2022 a Practitioner Event was held online, and this included the topics of:

- Mental Health Awareness
- Moral Distress
- NYAS (Children and Young People's rights)
- Professional Curiosity
- Suicide and Self-Harm
- Language that cares
- Recognising and Responding to neglect
- Safer Wales

In November 2022 a Practitioner Event was held online, which included the following topics:

- Parents, Families, and Allies Network (PFAN)
- Forced Marriage and Honour-Based Abuse
- Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum
- Just One click... 'Children, Technology and Online Behaviour'
- National Safe Spaces scheme
- The end of physical punishment in Wales
- Work of the Police Online Investigation Team
- A brief introduction to Technology Facilitated Abuse

**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.

**ANALYSIS**

This year’s score remains the same at 4, recognising that there are clear safeguarding arrangements in Monmouthshire, which draw upon partner agencies to robustly protect adults and children and appropriately respond to and manage risk. Never-the-less all services are under significant demand pressure which has an impact on the quality and consistency of safeguarding responses.

**KEY STRENGTHS:**

- The safeguarding Hub evidences how multi-agency working is effective, with positive working relationships and communication across partner agencies.
- Ongoing commitment to improving the quality of practice with key focus on development and training for practitioners.
- MCC continues to monitor and evaluate all processes and protocols to ensure effective safeguarding that is streamlined regionally.
- Adult safeguarding has stabilised through the appointment of permanent management and commitment has been given to undertaking enquires within prescribed timescales.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- The Hub will be evaluated following successful tender. Unfortunately there has been significant delay around this due to commissioning reasons.
- Continued improvement of the Section 126 enquiries being held within time-scale through further discussion with other professionals and agencies, and improvement processes within the safeguarding unit.
- The safeguarding Unit to continue improving Quality Assurance arrangements and identify workshops for practice improvement.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased development of Safeguarding understanding across Adult Services.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

### **PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:**

#### **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK:**

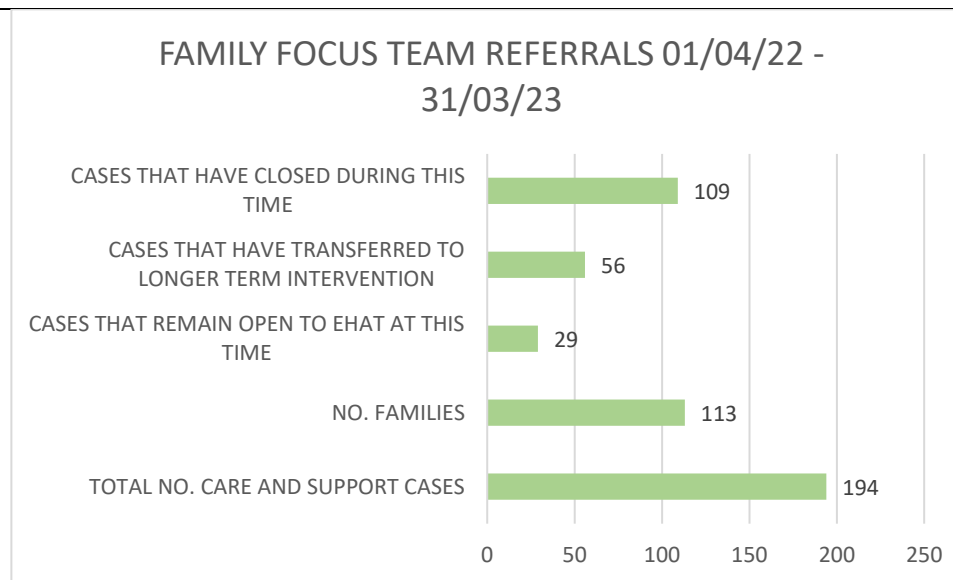
The multi-agency Hub is established and key in making safeguarding decisions with children and adults. The hub at County Hall, Usk enables agencies to physically sit with one other which supports positive working relationships and collaborative working. There is evidence of effective collaborative decisions to safeguard children and adults at risk in a timely manner. Monmouthshire are committing to involving multi-agency at the point of strategy discussions which informs strength based decision making to protect Monmouthshire's citizens.

Gwent Police are commissioning an external review of the Hub which has been out for tender since Summer 2022. Unfortunately, there is has been delay in commissioning a suitable service and this piece of work remains outstanding. During this period an evaluation of the Llamau Missing Children Team has commenced by Emerald Consultancy to review the current service provision. This service is provided across five Local Authorities, with Monmouthshire having the lowest number of missing children in Gwent.

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

#### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES:**

The Family Focus team, which sits within Early Help and Assessment team (entry point to Monmouthshire Statutory Services) drive forward the Care and Support Plan [CASP] agenda to provide short term focused intervention to families which prevent children entering the statutory Child Protection processed. The outcomes from this reporting period between 01.04.2022 and 31.03.2023 is shown below:



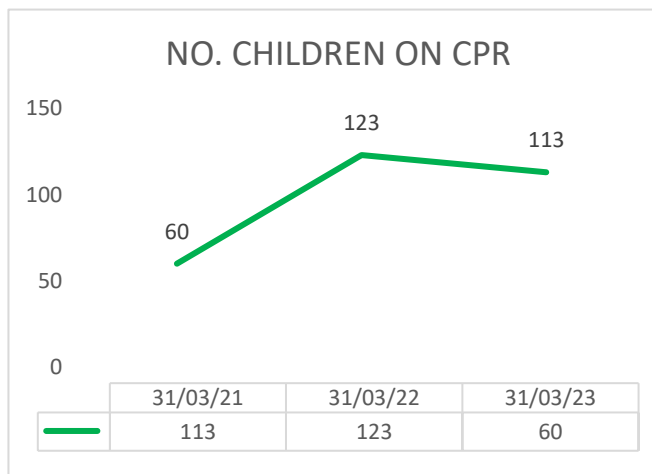
Overall, the current case management of families requiring care and support is relatively positive and whilst there have been some families that have progressed to closure who have been re-referred, not all of these families have necessitated further intervention. It has been possible to reinforce advice and guidance through the IAA process and/or signpost to other services for some of the families.

### CHILD PROTECTION

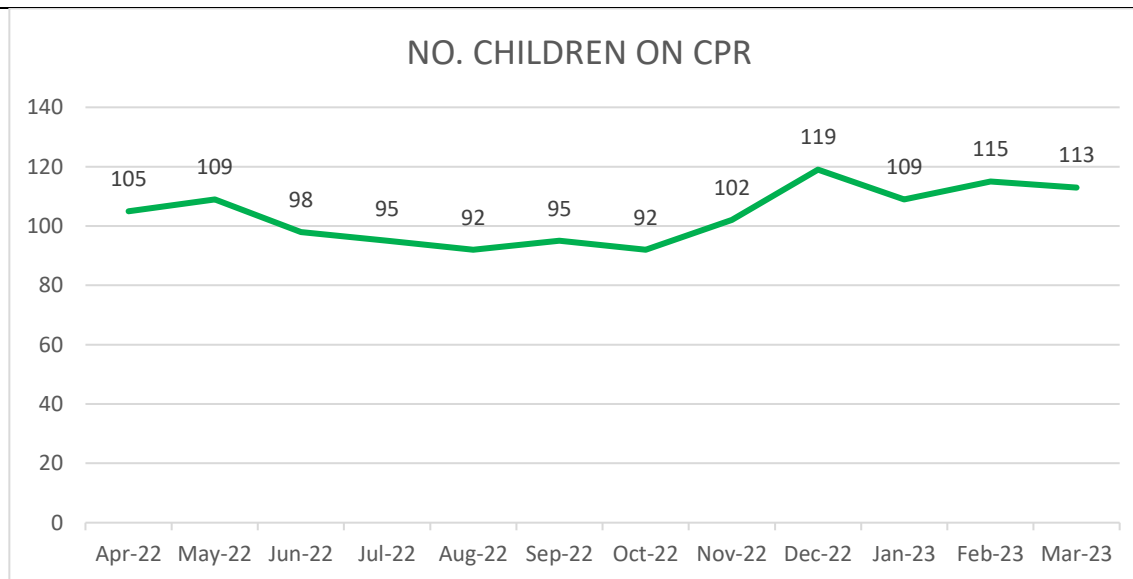
During this period there has been a rise in the number of children on Monmouthshire's Child Protection Register. Quality Assurance processes undertaken by the Child Protection Co-ordinator inform us that the children are remaining on the Child Protection Register longer to ensure the Child Protection Plan is completed in its entirety and the risks to the children have significantly reduced. The expansion of Family Focus longer term support intervention has been invested in in the core Child Protection and Court teams which has supported families and social worker assessments of risk and strengths. There have been no reoccurrences of children being added to the Child Protection Register following de-registration in this

period. The number of the children removed from the Child Protection Register for Care and Support Plans rather than removal for Court Intervention, would suggest that there has been good risk management and decision making.

At year end the number of children on the Child Protection Register was **113** [a slight decrease from previous year end of 123]



However, the following graph will demonstrate the movement of the child protection registration:



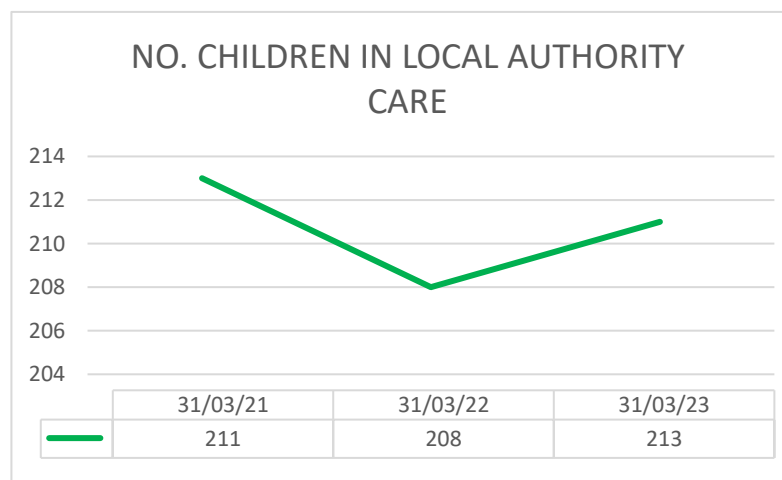
A key risk for the Children Services remains the challenges in recruitment of experienced qualified social workers, the service remains reliant at this point on agency cover. During this review period, data has also highlighted that there have been several cases where there have been changes of Social Worker. Where there has been changes in Social Workers, there have been small periods where statutory visits and core groups have not been completed in timescales. A Data Management Group has been convened, which includes Children Services Leadership Team, Team Managers, Performance Management team, and Workforce Development to address the issues and manage and improved the statutory safeguarding procedures.

A new Chairs Checklist has been devised to support with the quality assurance of Child Protection cases, including the review of reports, statutory obligations i.e., Visits and core groups, quoracy and timescales. This is completed for every review Child Protection Conference and the data shared with Senior Management weekly. There are still cases where review Child Protection Conferences are not taking place due to reports not being completed by the Social Worker on time, resulting in meetings having to be rescheduled [and out of timescales].



The Chairs Checklist will continue to capture data around the number of meetings having to be cancelled; to support in the quality assurance of Child Protection cases and the impact of teams and the service. This will highlight strengths in the teams as well as any barriers which can then be highlighted to Senior Management.

On 31/03/23 the number of children who were in Local Authority Care was **211**; this includes **14** Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]. This was **208** on 31/03/22, and **213** on 31/03/21.



### CHILDREN'S PLACEMENTS:

A challenge and key risk for Children Services has been the national shortage of foster and residential placements for Children Looked After which are registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Whilst it is recognised that this is as a result market issues beyond the responsibility of Local Authorities this has resulted in Children Services needing to place children in unregulated placements in Local Authority assets and short term lets (Outside Welsh Regulations). A further challenge to Children Services is that regulated care providers cannot provide care within unregulated placements resulting in contracting private nursing agency staff to provide 24 hour oversight in placement and increased Children Services support to ensure safeguarding.

During this period Children Services have worked openly with CIW to advise of the issues of welfare, care planning, efforts to locate registered placements, and multi-agency involvement in weekly updates on each child. Children Services have developed processes to manage these placements and a Service Manager led Placement Pressures meeting which supports Senior Manager oversight, redirection and development of resources, and co-ordination of multiagency support. The need for high level management of OWR placements has resulted in significant financial and resource pressures for Children Services.

There have been 5 cases in total.

### **ADULT SAFEGUARDING:**

The Adult Safeguarding Team has stabilised since the last evaluation with the successful recruitment of a new team manager. Several system and process changes have been introduced to improve communication, recording while improving efficiency. A significant improvement has been made in the completion of enquiries within the 7-day timescale set within the SSWB Act 2014. The year end performance for 2022/2023 being 86.4%, (361 of 418) of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse compared to 65.5% last year. This demonstrates improvements in collaboration and partnership working across Adult Services and with relevant stakeholders. A new protocol has been introduced in collaboration with Adult Services Teams to ensure priority is given to timely Safeguarding enquiry completion.

The number of referrals made and accepted to Adult Safeguarding has reduced since the last evaluation. This is because the team has become more consistent in its application of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Greater consistency in the application of thresholds outlined in the Gwent Safeguarding Board *Adult Safeguarding Guidance - To Report or Not To Report* has led to a reduction in referrals taken into Safeguarding from 583 in 2021/2022 to 418 in 2022/2023. The reduction accounts for better understanding of the proportionality of responses made to reports that are not necessarily related to abuse and neglect. There is also better recognition that concerns can be managed, addressed and service users safeguarded through improving practice and taking preventative action in response to concerns. Partners and agencies are also reminded that that safeguarding responsibility is ubiquitous to all roles.

Considerable development work has been undertaken by the Adult Safeguarding Team in relation to developing a suite of Safeguarding Practice Exchange topic presentations in collaboration with the Workforce Development Team to address learning needs. These have been based on

responses to a questionnaire sent to Adult Services Teams in early 2022. The first topic for the Practice Exchange - “Section 126 Enquiries” - will be delivered by Adult Safeguarding Coordinators in 6 sessions initially, starting in September 2023.

Work has progressed with key stakeholders in relation to the development of Local Pathways for Modern Day slavery in conjunction with BASWO and Domestic Abuse in conjunction with Gwent Police. There has been further enhanced joint working on cases within the Safeguarding Hub where there are both children and adults at risk. This has resulted in improved working relationships, greater understanding of roles and learning contributing to improved outcomes for victims.

Improvements in the management and response to concerns about Practitioners, (People in a Position of Trust under Part 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures) has also been noted since the last evaluation. Local Authority Designated Officers for Safeguarding are in place for concerns relating to those who work or volunteer with Children and Adults providing timely and proportionate advice to employers and ensuring consistent and timely management of safeguarding concerns.

Further developmental work with colleagues in Housing and Gwent Police will be required over the next 12 months to improve responses to adults who are the victims of ‘mate crime’ and exploitation where alcohol and other substances are a factor. This is attributed to a rising number of referrals of younger adults where multiple agencies share concerns and consideration of the issues is considered by a variety of forum including Housing Intervention Panel, Section 115 Meetings under of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as well as Safeguarding. This will form part of the workstream for Monmouthshire Exploitation Group, moving forward.

The use of WCCIS has been introduced in Mental Health and Learning Disability Teams in Adult Services through Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, whose staff are part of those teams and all work undertaken by them is now recorded on this system. Monmouthshire Safeguarding access to WCCIS has not been granted which does hamper access to information to inform decision making. The Team is reliant on 3<sup>rd</sup> parties who do have access to check the system for information. However, this is not ideal. This has been escalated to the Safeguarding Service Manager for discussion with the GWASB.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out a performance evaluation inspection of Adult Services in July 2022. The purpose of the inspection was to review Monmouthshire’s performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation. The inspection notes “the local authority responds to immediate safeguarding concerns. Through reading social care records, we saw evidence of professionals in the safeguarding team working effectively with colleagues from the local health board and police, as well as wider local authority teams, to protect adults at risk.

Whilst we found evidence of improvement in the time taken to undertake enquiries, there remains delay in some situations. The local authority needs to continue to work with partners to embed the threshold for safeguarding concerns as well as the need for enquires to be completed in line with statutory guidance”

**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.

**ANALYSIS**

There are clear operating processes in place within Social Care and Health to ensure a robust approach for all social care commissioning for children and adults. There is good evidence of safeguarding embedded within all areas of the Council, which includes Licensing and Public Protection and Passenger Transport Units. Schools, and other parts of the Council working with children / adults at risk, indicate there are secure arrangements for contracted services. The Safe Services score remains at 4 to recognise these positives along with the strengthened working relationships between Safeguarding and Commissioning for both adults and children.

**KEY STRENGTHS:**

- The SAFE process 2021-23 has completed with evidence of robust safeguarding arrangements in all areas of the council.
- Commissioning and the Safeguarding Unit have positive relationship.
- There are regular safeguarding meetings with individual directorates to offer ongoing advice and guidance.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Safe roll out 2023-25 to commence.
- Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority, so that directorates can be their own lead with their own SAFE.
- Safeguarding Unit to promote that Directorates have more autonomy in completing their individual SAFEs with advice and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Wellbeing Team has offered significant support to communities</li> </ul>	<p>guidance to be sought from the Safeguarding Unit where necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.</li> <li>- Evaluation of the Wellbeing Team.</li> </ul>
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**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.

**COMMISSIONING:**

Children’s Services

Monmouthshire’s standard quality assurance monitoring process continued during the 22-23 year for residential and supported accommodation placements, this includes an annual monitoring visit to all in county providers (for those new in placement this occurs between 6-12 months after placement start date) with additional follow up visits as needed. For those children placed out of area desktop monitoring is carried out for all providers, starting from 6 months after placement start date, this is revisited 6 monthly from end of process and physical visits will occur as needed on a risk assessed basis.

No children’s providers were in Provider Performance Monitoring or Escalating Concerns processes led by Monmouthshire during this period.

Adult’s Services

Monmouthshire’s standard quality assurance monitoring process continued during the 22-23 year for all commissioned Adult Social Care placements, for in county placements this includes an annual monitoring visit and two relationship visits per year (if needed, dependent on provider size) with additional follow up visits as needed. In most circumstances, out of county providers are monitored via their host authority; in exceptional circumstances where no one from the host authority is placed we will liaise accordingly to plan monitoring.

During the 22-23 period Monmouthshire had:

- 1 older adult nursing home being managed via the Escalating Concerns process from 21-22, this was ended in June 22, and they were then supported via Provider Performance until September 22
- 1 younger adult nursing home being managed via Provider Performance starting March 23.

Safeguarding vulnerable people is one of the Council's main corporate priorities, public procurement has an essential role to play in ensuring all relevant safeguarding checks have been embedded within the tender process and that safeguarding policies, procedures and training are integral for the duration of the contract. The aim of the Council and the procurement function will be to work with our suppliers and contractors to actively safeguard and promote the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults across their organisations and supply chains.

As part of these commitments the Council's Safeguarding and Procurement teams are developing a Modern Slavery Statement that will support the Council to meet equality, fair work, and safeguarding obligations. Work is ongoing in relation to this.

#### **SAFEGUARDING UNIT:**

The Safeguarding Unit has good links with all directorates in the council offering advice and guidance. There are particularly strong links with the Public Transport Unit and leisure services, with regular meetings to explore any safeguarding enquiries.

The Safeguarding Unit has a prompt approach to DBS risk assessments being undertaken for all areas of the council and schools.

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 are attended by the Child Protection Coordinator. Licensing report that they continue to complete DBS checks every 6 months for drivers, rather than 3 years, which also include operators who have access to book records or dispatch vehicles. Licensing also ensures drivers conduct safeguarding training and also refresher training at the end of their 3 yearly licences so they can progress with a renewal application.

#### **VOLUNTEERING:**

The Wellbeing Team continues to support Monmouthshire communities, with an evaluation process currently underway, running parallel to the development of the LINKS Data Management and Evaluation System. It is anticipated that by March 2024, the Wellbeing Team will have access to comprehensive and actionable data that will enable them to conduct a thorough evaluation of the project.

LINKS will enable deeper understanding of emerging trends, the attainment of individual outcomes, the measurement of success across various suppliers and wellbeing opportunities, as well as the identification of any gaps in service provision. Consequently, the system will equip to the Community and Wellbeing team to make better informed data driven decisions.

In descending order, the highest proportion of support requests related to Connecting with others, cost of living, Ukrainian specific support, housing support, and mental health. The Wellbeing team received 371 support request and made 476 links (referrals) into 121 different preventative, early intervention and wellbeing opportunities in 2022-23

Members of the Wellbeing Team are subject to comprehensive and robust training which includes:

- Technical and compliance related courses including health and safety, food hygiene and risk assessment.
- Wellbeing specific courses such as Mental Health Awareness, safe manual handling and out and about training
- Leadership Training to support volunteer leader to support their teams
- Community development training

The training is aimed at creating a resilient community sector equipped to provide preventative and early intervention wellbeing opportunities as the demographic of 'Monmouthshire evolves and as new local and global factors impact on communities.

#### **LICENSING:**

There is evidence of safeguarding embedded within Licensing services and Passenger Transport Unit (PTU)

Licensing & Regulatory (L&R) Committee are trained and competent in making decisions about suitability of taxi drivers, etc.

Responsible Authority meetings continue, to review any licensed premises with safety issues, and well attended. DBS checks are now required every 6 months for drivers, rather than 3 years. This will also include operators who have access to book records or dispatch vehicles. This was implemented October 2021, and continues. Drivers also have to have safeguarding training which needs to be updated every 3 years when they reapply for their licence. New Members in the L&R Committee in May 2022 (due to change in administration) were also trained in decision making regarding cases brought before them, e.g. 'fit and proper' test for taxi drivers.



**APPENDIX 3 - SAFEGUARDING CURRENT ACTIVITY PLAN [2022 – 2023]:**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>RAG RATING</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>GOOD GOVERNANCE</b>				
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		
<b>SAFE WORKFORCE</b>				
Ongoing development of ‘Thingy’ to ensure training records are centrally managed	Systems and Data Team	March 2023		Ongoing
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		Ongoing
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		

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>RAG RATING</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
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		Ongoing Nationally
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		Ongoing Regionally
<b>PREVENTATIVE APPROACH</b>				
Development of VAWDASV refresher course for all staff and to be rolled out across the Council	Training Unit	March 2023		Ongoing with Thinqi
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		Ongoing with Thinqi
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		

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>RAG RATING</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Wellbeing Team to evaluate the effectiveness of their support to inform future decisions about the Team	Wellbeing Team	March 2023		
<b>ROBUST PROTECTION</b>				
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		Tender application is still ongoing
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		
<b>SAFE SERVICES</b>				
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		

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING	NOTES
Commissioning to review services on provider list and provider feedback.	Commissioning	March 2023		Ongoing
Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2023		Ongoing
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		Ongoing
Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.	Safeguarding Unit All Directorates	March 2023		Ongoing

**APPENDIX 4 - SAFEGUARDING PROPOSED ACTIVITY PLAN [2023 – 2024]:**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<b>GOOD GOVERNANCE</b>		
Regional SAFE roll out 2023 – 2025.	All Directorates	March 2025
Corporate Safeguarding Policy to reviewed when updates arise i.e. the National Safeguarding Training Framework 2023/4 and Modern Day Slavery Statement.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Data set for WASG to be used as a meaningful tool in WASG to identify key themes.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Consideration for further training and understanding of safeguarding priorities for all elected members.	Training Unit	March 2024
<b>SAFE WORKFORCE</b>		
Ongoing development of ‘Thinqi’ to ensure training records are centrally managed	Systems and Data Team	March 2024
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 2024
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront	Systems and Data Team	March 2024
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 2024
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 2024
Training Standards to be considered from a Monmouthshire perspective. Consideration to adopt this national framework.	Safeguarding Unit WASG Training Unit	March 2024

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
Safer Recruitment Policy to be reviewed; Task & Finish Group to be identified, to include the Child Protection Co-ordinator.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
<b>PREVENTATIVE APPROACH</b>		
Development of VAWDASV refresher course for all staff and to be rolled out across the Council.	Training Unit	March 2024
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 2024
Remainder of Directorates to be included in Modern Day Slavery training.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Wellbeing Team to continue 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 2024
Wellbeing Team to evaluate the effectiveness of their support to inform future decisions about the Team.	Wellbeing Team	March 2024
The Modern-Day slavery statement needs to be completed and embedded across the council.	Procurement Safeguarding Unit to offer advice and guidance	March 2024
NRM pilot and change in threshold to be understood in greater depth.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
<b>ROBUST PROTECTION</b>		
The Hub will be evaluated following successful tender, which is being commissioned by Gwent Police	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Police	March 2024
Continue to expand the Hub to include further agencies.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
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 2024
Safeguarding Unit to continue improving Quality Assurance arrangements and identify workshops for practice improvement.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
Increased development of Safeguarding understanding across Adult Services.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
<b>SAFE SERVICES</b>		
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 2024
Commissioning to review services on provider list and provider feedback.	Commissioning	March 2024
Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024
Safeguarding Unit to promote that Directorates have more autonomy in completing their individual SAFEs with advice and guidance to be sought from the Safeguarding Unit where necessary.	Safeguarding Unit All Directorates	March 2024
Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.	Safeguarding Unit All Directorates	March 2024
Evaluation of the Wellbeing Team.	Wellbeing Team	March 2024