



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

SUBJECT:	Safeguarding Annual Evaluation Report
MEETING:	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	8th October 2024
Division /Ward Affected :	All

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is:

- To evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2023 / 2024 highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2024 - 2025.
- 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 and November 2023.

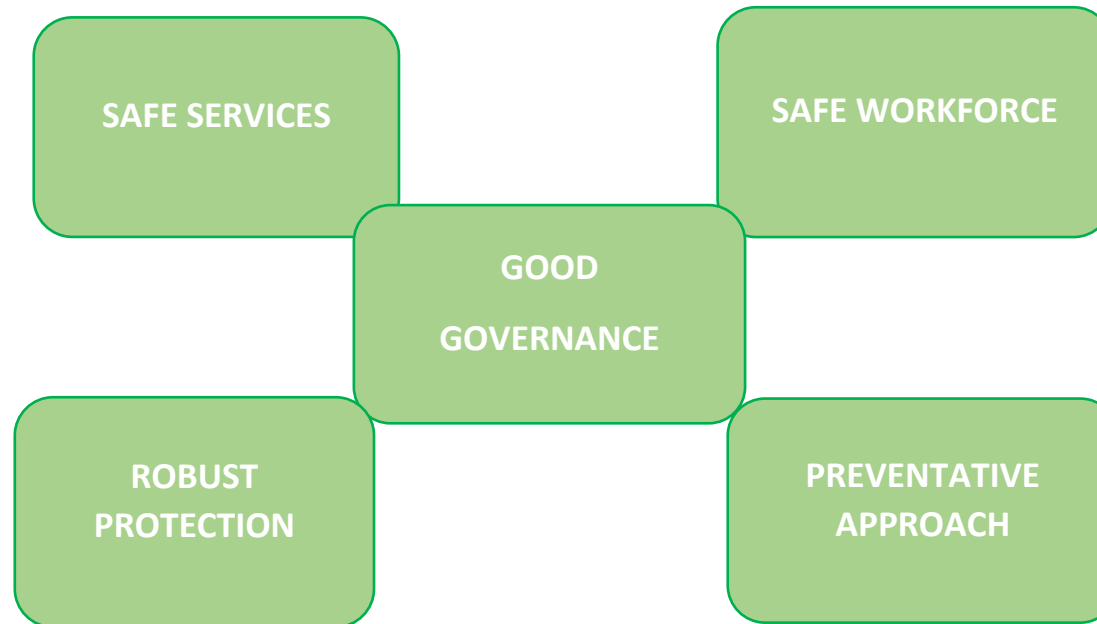
2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- For members to scrutinise the annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report prior to its presentation at Council in October 2024.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1** 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.
- 3.2** 2023-24 was a period of time when there were key pressures on service provision with increased demand for assessment and services for both children and adults at risk. The financial context required savings to be implemented across the Council creating additional pressure on services and resources. Budget pressures across the public sector resulted in partner agencies seeking to make service changes and reductions in order to make savings. During this period the Welsh Government continued to progress their agenda to remove profit from the care of children by 2027. The disruption in both the residential and private fostering markets have exacerbated placement insufficiency resulting in challenges to meet the needs of children looked after. Long-term sickness during the year within the Safeguarding Unit, resulted in some reduction in capacity and ultimately the need to recruit to the posts of Quality Assurance Officer and Safeguarding Service Manager. Despite these challenges, the overall self-assessed scores across the 5 domains of safeguarding either remained the same or improved by 1.
- 3.3** 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 (WASG). The report seeks to balance qualitative and quantitative data and draw in other sources of information to support the evaluation.

THE CORNERSTONES OF SAFEGUARDING IN MONMOUTHSHIRE:



- 3.4** 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 to provide an overall judgement of effectiveness between 1 [major weaknesses] and 6 [excellent / outstanding]. The WASG seeks to triangulate the self-assessment process by drawing on a number or sources of information:

- (1) A shared understanding of “what good looks like” based on experience, professional judgement, and representation on national and regional safeguarding boards;
- (2) Data provided to and produced by Care Inspectorate Wales on both a national and regional basis;
- (3) Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection of Children Services Feb 24;
- (4) Review of performance data monthly to track trends and highlight performance issues against local, regional and national targets;
- (5) Data and information from the regional safeguarding board and its subgroups;
- (6) Quarterly Safeguarding reports produced by Independent Reviewing Officers.

3.5 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	April 2023 – March 2024
GOOD GOVERNANCE	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
SAFE WORKFORCE	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	5
ROBUST PROTECTION	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	5
SAFE SERVICES	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
TOTAL	<u>16</u>	<u>20</u>	19	18	21	21	21	23

3.6 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

3.7 Priority improvement actions arising from the evaluation form the basis of the action plan which is implemented and monitored through WASG.

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.
- 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.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no resource implications to this report.

7. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS [INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING]:

This report is critically concerned with the effectiveness of safeguarding and corporate parenting (for children looked after) in Monmouthshire County Council.

8. CONSULTEES:

Members of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG]
Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Scrutiny Committee October 2024

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#)

10. AUTHOR:

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THE EVALUATION:

1. GOOD GOVERNANCE

<p>SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5</p>
<p><u>WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?</u></p> <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>
<p style="text-align: center;">ANALYSIS</p> <p>Despite resource pressures across directorates and capacity issues within the Safeguarding Unit, safeguarding has remained a priority for the Council with key strengths within directorates and across council relationships. The SAFE (Safeguarding Assessment Framework for Evaluation) process has continued to roll out across directorates and reviews have taken place in a timely manner. The Safeguarding Unit continues to be available to offer support and advice as well as being the conduit for new and developing safeguarding policy and guidance from the Regional Safeguarding Board. Issues raised within the previous SAFE assessment led to the strengthening of support in the safe recruitment process, specifically in risk management following DBS certifications.</p> <p>Monmouthshire representation and engagement in the work of Gwent Safeguarding Board remains strong and the priorities set in in the regional board’s annual plan are reflected in the priority work of the Council’s Safeguarding Unit. The Whole Authority Safeguarding Group continues to receive, review, and implement developments in safeguarding flowing from regional and national policy.</p>

Within this period there was a change of Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services from Cllr Tudor Thomas to Cllr Ian Chandler. There are reporting mechanisms in place into Scrutiny and Council strengthened by positive relationships between officers and Council Leaders.

The CIW inspection report of Children’s Services found that *‘safeguarding is understood at many levels of the organisation’*.

For these reasons our self-assessment score remains at 5.

KEY STRENGTHS:	NEXT STEPS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safeguarding Audit Framework for Evaluation [SAFE] is in place and a regional form has now been implemented. - Continuous positive relationships between Safeguarding Unit and Directorates with ongoing provision of advice and guidance for individual safeguarding issues. - Committed participation by Monmouthshire Safeguarding Unit in the Regional Safeguarding Board groups and subgroups, this influences and shapes regional plans and supports the quality assurance of local practice. - Monmouthshire’s Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been updated (ratified November 2023) following the introduction of the National Safeguarding Training Standards. - The Core Data Set for safeguarding has been agreed by WASG and is now being collated on a regular basis to support increased oversight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the SAFE process 2023 - 2025 - Directorates to develop increased autonomy in completing their individual SAFEs, with advice and guidance to be sought from the Safeguarding Unit where necessary. - Recruitment of a Safeguarding Service Manager. - Ensure correct link between Thinqi and the implementation of the National Training Standards to include Safeguarding training for Elected Members and School Governors. - Continue to develop the core data set as a standard agenda item for WASG to ensure whole council scrutiny.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mechanisms are in place to ensure the Council and Cabinet are informed about the progress of safeguarding issues via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Officer of Health, Social Care and Safeguarding’s Report to Council (previous 7/12/23) • Corporate Parenting Panel • Monthly meetings between Children and Adult Heads of Service, Chief Officer and Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member. 	
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PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:

SAFEGUARDING AUDIT FRAMEWORK EVALUATION [SAFE]: The Safeguarding Unit oversee the SAFE process to ensure that all directorates undertake their self- assessment in line with the Local Authority’s Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Social Services and Safeguarding Act (2014). SAFEs are completed within every directorate by those services / teams that work with adults at risk, children, young people and families. A ‘tracker’ is in place to allow escalation to directorate leads or WASG should the self-assessment be delayed, or if there are significant concerns. During last the last SAFE process, no matters required escalation.

Directorate Safeguarding Leads have developed an understanding of safeguarding and how it applies in their own service areas, seeking advice and guidance from the Safeguarding Unit when required. Whilst the SAFE is a self-assessment, the outcomes are reviewed by the Safeguarding Unit. The SAFE process originally developed in Monmouthshire has now been adopted across the other Gwent Authorities resulting in a regional tool. This assists in being able to compare and contrast good practice in safeguarding at a regional level.

SAFEGUARDING CORPORATE POLICY: The Safeguarding Corporate Policy was reviewed in July 2022 and in November 2023 and is due for review in July 2024, when it will be updated to include the introduction of the revised National Exploitation Plan.

GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD [GSB]: 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 Children’s Services, and Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adults Services representing Monmouthshire at Head of Service Level. The Gwent Safeguarding Board [GSB] delivers its strategic priorities through a number of subgroups that manage the core business and other more specific pieces of work, such as devising multiagency

guidance and protocols, undertaking case reviews, and devising safeguarding training modules. Members of the Safeguarding Unit either chair or are members of the subgroups and working groups of the Safeguarding Board. Membership of these groups also provides 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 bi-monthly on a digital platform. The group ensures that corporate Safeguarding has oversight at a senior level, with membership from each directorate lead. These meetings identify safeguarding concerns and themes; share knowledge around safeguarding issues and, where required, promote a strategic and coordinated approach. A Core Data set has been agreed by WASG. Moving forward, this should provide increased opportunity to inform WASG members of safeguarding performance at a whole authority level.

2. SAFE WORKFORCE

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4

WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?

We ensure that safe recruitment and human resource (HR) 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.

ANALYSIS

There has been significant development of the Thinqi system across the council to support the management of training across the workforce. The system is now being implemented across all areas. The National Training Standards for safeguarding have been adopted in Monmouthshire. Whilst there are delays in the development of a regional safeguarding training offer (in line with the new standards), safeguarding training continues to be effectively delivered within Monmouthshire through collaboration between Safeguarding Leads and the Training and Workforce Development team. The right level of safeguarding training has been identified for the workforce based on role, task and regulatory requirements. Safeguarding Training continues to be offered to all new starters as part of their induction either digitally or in person via the Safeguarding Unit. This supports and informs a workforce “who are the eyes and ears” of the council in recognising the signs and symptoms of safeguarding concerns - knowing how and when to respond helps keep our communities safe.

Monmouthshire has continued strong arrangements to ensure safe recruitment. There are good processes and systems in place, which are reviewed and monitored to ensure that safe recruitment practice is followed. Monmouthshire's Safe Recruitment Policy is aligned to the Gwent Safeguarding Board's Multiagency Policy (March 2024)

There is a well-developed process in place to respond to any concerns raised about a professional or person in a position of trust (paid or unpaid) working with children or adults at risk (known as Practitioner Concerns). The process is aligned to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) and the Gwent Safeguarding Board protocol. There have been some concerns about delays within the process, much of which are beyond the influence of the local authority, and sit primarily with the police and Criminal Prosecution Service. Delays are escalated to the Safeguarding Board; however, this remains an issue which impacts all of the Gwent Authorities.

We have retained the score at 4 because we are currently transitioning into a revised training offer (in line with the national standards) and onto a new training management system (Thinqi). The various levels of the training offer are being developed and will need to be fully embedded into Thinqi so that mandated safeguarding training records can be monitored. There is still more to do to fully implement Thinqi across the Council. Currently, this has meant that we are hampered in reporting accurate safeguarding training data.

KEY STRENGTHS:	NEXT STEPS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous priority given to safe recruitment practice which is well embedded. - Gwent Safeguarding Board has ratified the Safer Recruitment Policy and Safer Employment guidance (March 2024). - The Thingi training management system is being implemented across the council which will provide accurate information on completion rates of mandated safeguarding training. - Monmouthshire has adopted the National Safeguarding Framework. - Multi Agency Local Practitioner Forums run biannually by the Gwent Safeguarding Board raise issue of wellbeing and safeguarding to staff from a range of agencies and are well attended in Monmouthshire. - The Practitioner Concerns process is well embedded with a strong multiagency presence, and effective communication with the Safeguarding Unit regarding advice over thresholds and required actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thingi system to be fully implemented across all areas of the council to support full and accurate safeguarding training data. - National Training Standards to be embedded within Thingi - To review and implement any actions arising from the national task and finish group developing further guidance around Practitioner Concerns.

PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:

- The Gwent Safeguarding Board has ratified their Multiagency Safe Recruitment protocol (March 2004) which sits alongside Monmouthshire's own internal guidance and is well aligned.
- People Services have reported a faster turnover of DBS checks, which means that new staff are able to on-board in a timely way.
- Systems and processes which provide notifications for people and their managers who require DBS checks are automated via Power Bi processes.
- Safe Recruitment processes are part of the considerations within the SAFE assessment within all directorates.

PRACTITIONER CONCERNS / ALLEGATIONS:

Monmouthshire's Safeguarding Unit has overall responsibility for the management of the Practitioner Concerns / People in a Position of Trust process as set out in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. A practitioner concern is when an allegation of potential or actual harm or abuse is made against a person working in a position of trust, either in their personal or professional life.

- Practitioner Concerns 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 preventing delays, recognising the impact this has on individuals and on wider employment issues within the council. The primary cause of delays are due to the length of time police take to conclude criminal investigations and delays in CPS advice. Police and CPS delays are caused by pressure within that system and reprioritisation based on levels of risk. A further issue is the increase in on-line / digital abuse which is time and resource heavy to investigate.
- The safeguarding unit supports all decision making within the practitioner concerns process - intervening where possible to expediate the conclusion and ensuring that staff wellbeing is a main consideration throughout and that appropriate support is offered.
- The Safeguarding Unit members work closely across all 5 Gwent Local Authorities to ensure consistent thresholds around practitioner concerns, which helps to benchmark local practice.

PCM DELAYS:

Here is the breakdown of PCM cases and the time taken to conclude during this period:

Length of time to conclude	No. cases
<1 month	15
1 month	19
2 months	6
3 months	4
4 months	3
5 months	4
6 months	1
7 months	1
12 months	1

Out of the 10 cases that took 4+ months:

8 related to Police investigations (awaiting advice from CPS)

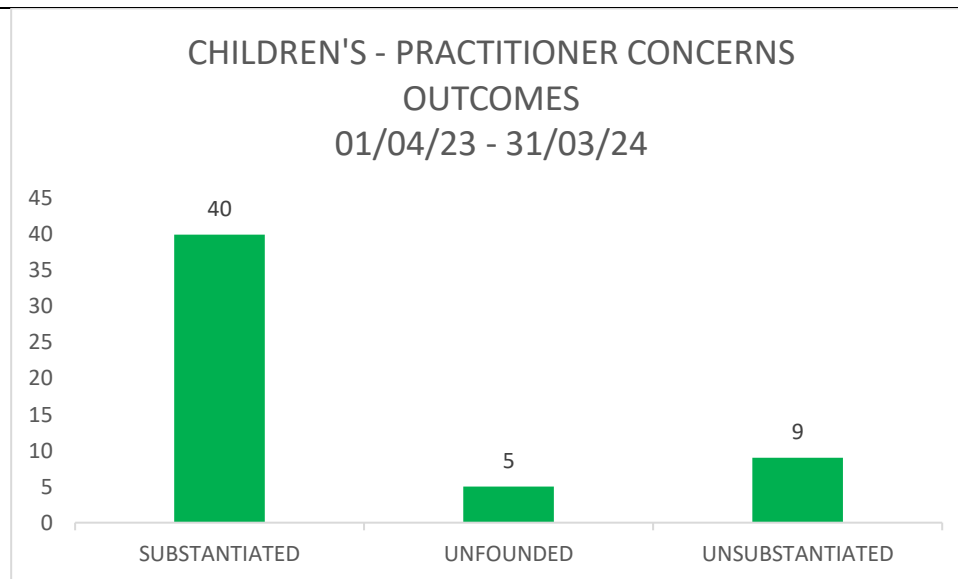
2 related to internal investigations (delays caused through the circumstances of the individuals concerned)

During this time, risk assessments for the person involved, are continually reviewed [i.e. the persons position in work and whether suspension or re-deployment is required].

Children Services:

During 01/04/23 – 31/03/24 the Unit held Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings about **75** practitioners, relating to **87** children. During the same period **54** Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings were concluded, resulting in 74% cases concluding with a Substantiated outcome.

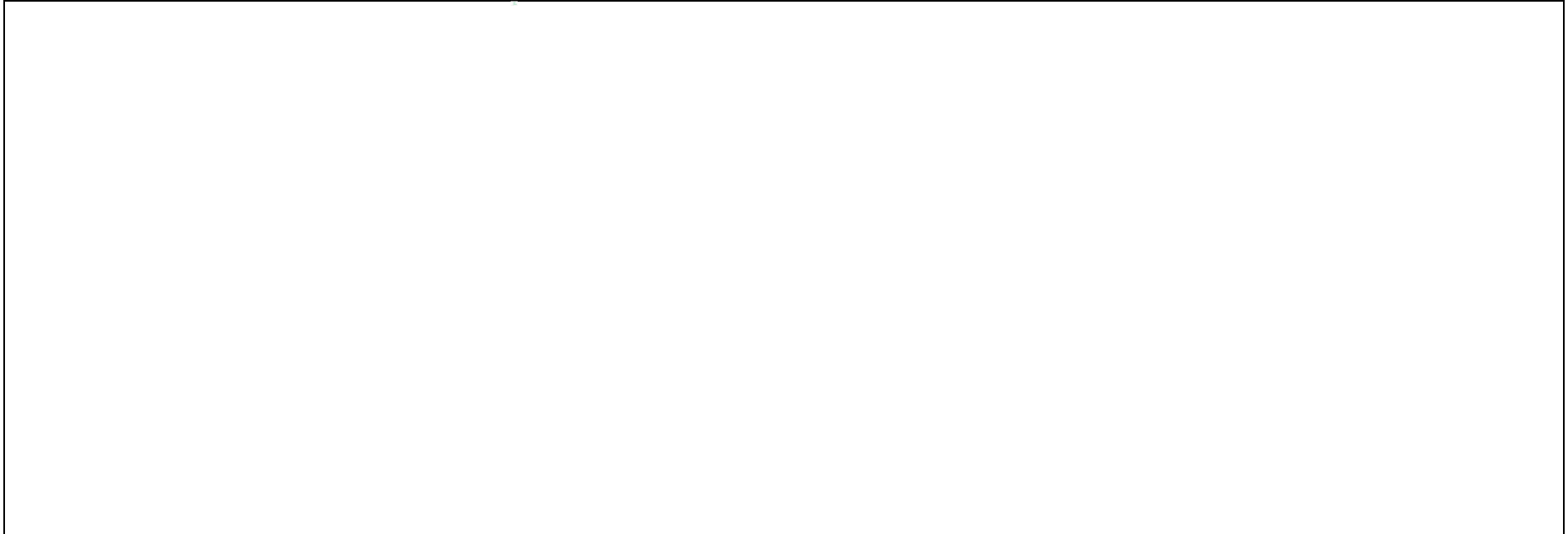
In terms of the professionals subject to allegations, education staff are the largest of group followed by sports instructors.



Adults:

During 01/04/23 – 31/03/24 the Safeguarding Unit held Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings about **89** practitioners, relating to **57** adults at risk following practitioner allegations. During the same period **68** Practitioner Concerns Strategy Meetings were concluded, resulting in 50% cases concluding with the Substantiated outcome.

Domiciliary care workers are the professional group subject to the highest numbers of allegations, followed closely by hospital support workers and registered nurses.



3. PREVENTATIVE APPROACH**SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5****WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?**

We work collectively and with partners to identify emerging issues, risks and challenges within our communities. We demonstrate clear multiagency approaches to developing practice in how we respond to emerging safeguarding issues. We support access to universal and targeted support services to reduce risks through early intervention and preventative approaches.

Within Children's Services, we develop services at all levels aimed at preventing children from experiencing harm - supporting the development of parental understanding and skills to prevent the need for children to be looked after and support their safe exit from care.

ANALYSIS

There remains a strong multi agency approach to early help and prevention, seeking to support vulnerable people stay safe and reduce the risks of abuse and harm. **The self-assessed score has therefore remained at 5** for the following reasons:

There are a number of partnership forums (for example, the Homeless Intervention Panel, SPACE Wellbeing panel and the Monmouthshire Exploitation Group) which support information sharing and partnership working – helping to shape service development and active risk management in the face of issues affecting communities.

Monmouthshire Exploitation Group (MEG) is chaired by the Safeguarding Service Manager, and attended by a wide range of council partners including Community Policing, Public Health, Safer Communities, Children and Adult Safeguarding, Education Safeguarding, Housing and Registered Social Landlords, Youth Offending Services and St Giles Trust (a charity using expertise and real-life past experiences to support people who are hard to engage). MEG has co-ordinated approaches to emerging issues such as the exploitation of young people to sell Vapes within schools. The group has also started to consider how to develop safeguarding practice around young people vulnerable to exploitation during their transition to adulthood, particularly when ‘children’s’ support services cease at 18.

Monmouthshire utilises regional framework and toolkits to support practitioners in recognising and managing issues of child and adult exploitation. The regional forums such as MACE (Multi-agency child exploitation meetings) have allowed for a wider focus on perpetrators and locations across county boundaries where addressing risks require a multiagency approach. MACE is also now the forum for considering the potential exploitation of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The Police have recognised Monmouthshire’s good practice and management of the exploitation of young people and vulnerable adults and seek to hold the Authority’s work as an exemplar across Gwent.

Early help support services for children and families are well maintained and have managed to reduce waiting times, seeing a level of normal business resuming following the challenges raised during the pandemic. Whilst there is always more to do, Monmouthshire’s community-based teams are committed to building safer and more resilient communities. Feedback from CIW during inspection of Children Services (Feb 24) noted that there were high levels of service user satisfaction and participation related to the services provided outside of the statutory arena, as well as strong partnership working at this level. The dependency on grants to support many elements of early help and preventative services remains a risk.

<p>There has been a wider lens applied to “prevention” using available grants to develop services aimed at supported children exit safely from statutory services (child protection of child looked after) and to avoid repeat referrals.</p>	
KEY STRENGTHS:	NEXT STEPS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preventative safeguarding and partnership working remains strong. - There has been a wider lens applied to “preventative services” supporting vulnerable people to exit from the statutory system and continue to live safely within their communities. - The INFACCT service has been developed to support and shape Children and Families involvement in community-based support, build on established approaches. - MEG supports the Council to address issues around exploitation, and the Council has been recognised for its good practice in tackling exploitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen the links between the Wellbeing Team, the Safeguarding Unit and MEG. - MEG to work with partners both regionally and locally to develop transitional safeguarding to support young adults vulnerable to exploitation. - Complete the Modern-Day slavery statement and update the Corporate Safeguarding Policy. - Support Gwent Police in recruiting for MARAC Chairs across the 5 LA’s (to support consistency of practice). - Include Neuro Diversity in the training profile for PREVENT. - Implement Thingi to support compliance with VAWDASV training.

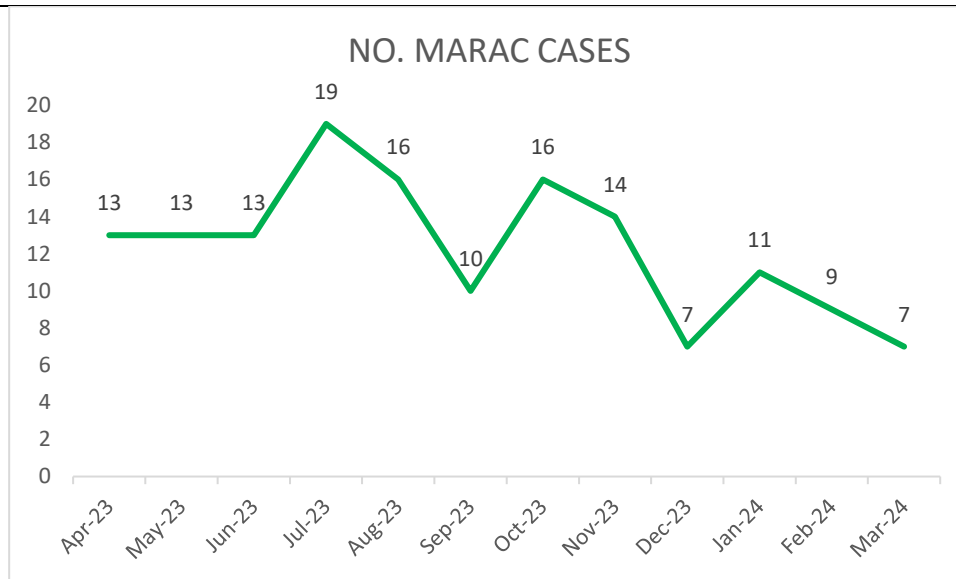
PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL ABUSE [VAWDASV] Monmouthshire remains committed to the prevention of Violence Against Woman, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [VAWDASV]. VAWDASV training is mandatory for all employees of the council and elected members. The council has continued to ensure that employees have the relevant level of VAWDASV training and modules are embedded within Thingi. Once Thingi is implemented across the Council training needs including refresher training will be flagged automatically.

MULTI AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CO-ORDINATION [MARAC]: The Safeguarding Unit currently shares chairing the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) with the police. MARACs consider high risk domestic abuse cases. MARAC is held on a fortnightly basis in Monmouthshire and the digital platform promotes multi-agency attendance to aid information sharing and shared safety planning. The number of cases discussed per month generally remains around 10-12. The number of people being referred into MARAC have decreased to 148 [from 159 last year]. However, the underlying trend is upward. Out of the 5 Gwent Local Authorities, Monmouthshire, whilst still the lowest, has seen the most significant increase over recent years. It is felt that the rise in numbers is linked to training generating a greater understanding of the risks related to domestic abuse and how to respond.

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

The number of cases discussed at monthly meetings during the year is shown below:



MODERN DAY SLAVERY / NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM:

Following the role out of the Modern-Day Slavery Protocol, there has been additional training delivered in Exploitation, Modern Day Slavery and trafficking including the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). This training is provided by Gwent Police as well as through the Gwent Safeguarding Board. Along with the other Gwent authorities, Monmouthshire continues to host children’s NRM panels as part of national pilot. This means that decisions about NRM threshold will be made by local Safeguarding partners, including Children’s Services, Police and Health. Adult’s suspected of being exploited are managed and supported by Gwent Police with the NRM applications being reviewed by the Home Office.

From April 2023 to March 2024, 71 NRM child referrals had been submitted throughout Gwent, 8 of which were regarding children from Monmouthshire [11%]. All referrals were processed within the 90-day limit although there are still significant delays in the Home Office ratifying decisions.

Of the 8 Monmouthshire children referred to NRM, 5 met the criteria for exploitation and were awarded an advocate. The remaining 3 children were retained within the Monmouthshire exploitation process under Operation Quartz. Of the 8 children, 5 were male and 3 were female.

The panels are well attended by Monmouthshire Local Authority and the First Responders (SW/Police/Education etc). The panels enable a high level of information sharing around the cases which assist panels in making informed decisions. The NRM regional coordinator attends regular Monmouthshire Children Exploitation Strategy Meeting meetings on a consultation basis which supports discussions to determine whether a referral to NRM should be submitted.

Criminal exploitation of children is the main category for referral into the NRM across England and Wales.

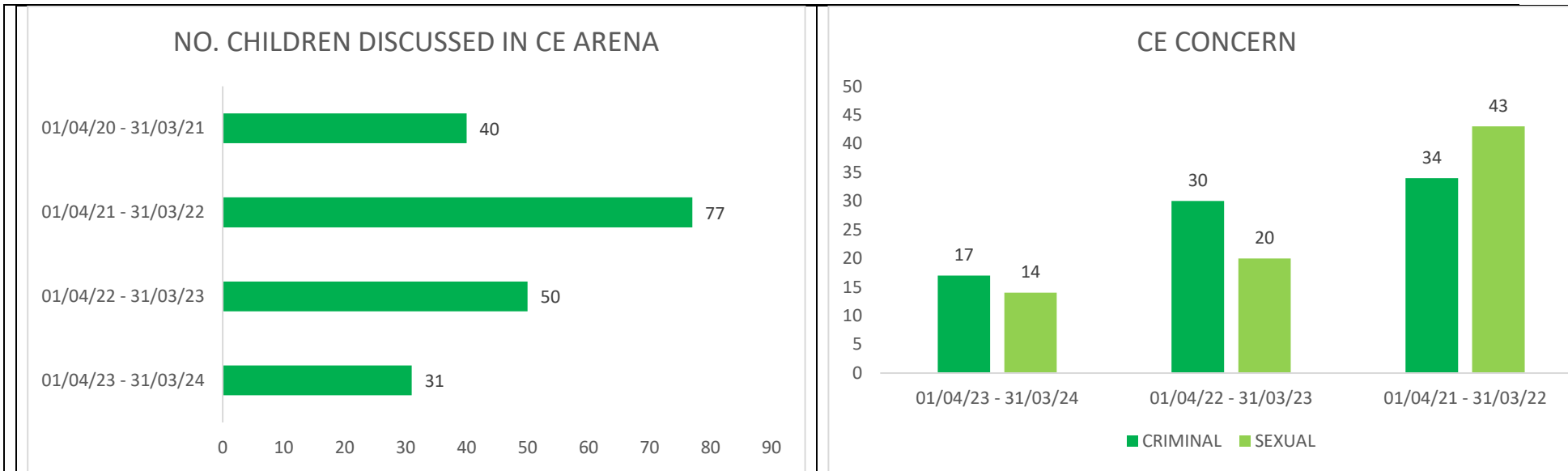
EXPLOITATION:

The exploitation of children is considered under 2 broad categories of Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation:

Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation

During 01/04/23 – 31/03/24, 31 children [a decrease from 50 children last year] were subject to Child Exploitation Meetings, where consideration is given for children to become part of a specialist Gwent Police Operation named Quartz. The decrease in numbers relates to professionals having a clearer understanding of the referral criteria. 17 children were considered at risk from Criminal Exploitation and 14 from Sexual Exploitation (although often children can be at risk of both).

During this period more males were discussed, which is a change to previous years. This is linked to the increasing focus and recognition of Criminal Exploitation (which is on the increase). Over half of all children considered were at risk of criminal exploitation rather than sexual exploitation.



The youngest child discussed was aged 12 with the largest age group being those children aged 16 years old. This can prove difficult when young people turn 18, when issues around ‘capacity’ and consent come into play. Gwent Police intend to undertake some work focussing on the vulnerable group of 16-23year olds. Monmouthshire Exploitation Group [MEG] now has a standing agenda item relating to the transition of vulnerable young people where there are concerns about exploitation. Members are considering how information can be appropriately shared and services improved with the aim of reducing risks to young adults.

Most of the cases being discussed, relate to criminal exploitation, and of those cases the majority are males involved in “drug running” (movement and transport of drugs). In some situations, it has been found that these exploited young men are themselves sexually exploiting young women/girls. Strategy meetings consider groups of young people who are linked to help formulate the most appropriate interventions at both a peer group and individual level. Chepstow/Caldicot are the areas within the County where there are most concerns over young people being at risk of exploitation, particularly around the secondary schools. These areas have been a focus of work being undertaken by Operation Quartz Officers.

Additional Information

- The majority of children being discussed in the exploitation arena, are those residing at home with parents, followed by those residing in residential settings/placements.
- Most children are supported under a Care and Support Plan, rather than a child protection plan.
- Input from the Engagement and Intervention Workers, as well as the Youth Homeless Co-ordinator supports positive outcomes for young people. 81% of children discussed remained in some form of education or training.
- The regional Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings continue to provide oversight of child exploitation cases. These meetings enable the region to share intelligence on linked cases, locations of concern and case escalations, the numbers of children being considered, as well themes and emerging trends.
- Monmouthshire is recognised within Gwent, as managing and responding well to children at risk of exploitation through timely and effective responses. This has led to a reduction of risks with no children needing to be re-referred into the exploitation arena following case closure. Gwent Police are seeking to replicate these strategies with other Gwent Local Authorities.
- Public Health Wales have taken a lead on the issue of exploitation and its links to Vapes including those being sold on school premises. Trading Standards remain active in trying to disrupt the flow of vapes from shops to school premises; however, much of the acquisition remains on-line. There are plans for Public Health Wales to co-ordinate Local Authority safeguarding leads, Trading Standards, Community Partnerships, Drug and Alcohol Services and the Police to form a Tobacco and Vaping Alliance (TVA) in order to tackle the issue.
- The Monmouthshire Exploitation Group (MEG) reports directly to the Public Service Board's Safer Monmouthshire Group and Whole Authority Safeguarding Group, meeting on a quarterly basis.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) has remained stable over the year. The numbers of UASC the Local Authority is required to support is capped at 16, although there has been up to 19 young people arriving here either via the National Transfer scheme or young people arriving 'spontaneously' under their own steam.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) have increased vulnerability to exploitation due to their life experiences and lack of appropriate community services.

Children's Services has increased the support provided to UASC aged 16+ whilst they await decisions regarding their asylum applications. These services include 2 semi-independent living properties with floating support in Newport and Cardiff and a dedicated support worker with experience in supporting asylum claims, and in ensuring that the education, religious, dietary and cultural needs of the young people are met.

SAFEGUARDING IN SCHOOLS:

- Each school/setting has its own Safeguarding Policy, using a shared template that is based on statutory guidance including Keeping Learners Safe.
- Monmouthshire continues to apply 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.
- There have been a number of initiatives implemented aimed at developing the understanding of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and how to manage (and reduce) incidences. Where children raise concerns about sexual harassment or sexually harmful behaviours a report is made to Children's services (for the victim and alleged perpetrator) and reported to police. Schools then manage risks in school via risk assessments and support plans, aiming to ensure that all children can continue to access education provision.
- A challenging bullying group (CBG) was established in 2022 in MCC. 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 (including sexual harassment).
- The central funding for the School Police Liaison Officer role was withdrawn by WG this year. Partner agencies, together with Gwent Police, are considering how to manage the absence of this role moving forward, so that key elements of the role (such as delivering sessions to groups in schools) are not lost.
- The schools remain informed about issues affected young people such as Emotions and Behaviour, School connectedness, Sleep, Friendship and bullying, Sexting, Body image through participating in SHRN (School Health Research Network). The outcomes of the report are evaluated by a task and finish group to identify areas of concern and to inform how we support learners.
- Multi Agency Meetings [MAMs] are in place to consider what support can be offered to pupils identified as vulnerable. There is good multiagency attendance including Building Stronger Families Team [BSFT], Young Carers, School Based Counselling and other partners across the pre statutory system. The MAMs play an important part in preventative safeguarding.

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 facilitates the co-ordination of early intervention services and preventive support for children, young people and their families. This helps to reduce the escalation of concerns to statutory thresholds. Partners include Families First projects Families Services Team, Creative Therapies and Acorn Project, Primary and Secondary CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), Family Intervention Team (FIT), School and Community Counsellors, as well as council led projects

Total Number of Referrals in Quarter 1	Total Number of Referrals in Quarter 2	Total Number of Referrals in Quarter 3	Total Number of Referrals in Quarter 4	Total Number of Referrals in 2023/24
305	262	325	235	1127

- Quarterly Average referrals received are 282. The main theme of referrals being received is for support around Anxiety, Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), Emotional Dysregulation, Sensory Needs, Traumatic Stress and non-compliant/defiant behaviours.
- The total number of referrals has dropped by approximately from 16% to 1127 from 1345 in 2022/2023. This is consistent with a further drop of approximately 16% from 1603 in 2021/2022. This continued 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.
- There was no waiting list for referrals being processed for a Panel discussion.
- Children’s services working in the preventative arena have very short waiting lists, and evaluation at the end of service provision indicates high levels of service user satisfaction for years 23/24.

INTEGRATING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TEAM (InFaCT):

The Integrating Families and Community Together (InFaCT) service works to help people navigate existing resources and also to come together to support each other and create community responses to local challenges. In 2023/24 InFaCT responded to 72 requests for support; 92% of these requests were closed with a successful outcome i.e. InFaCT was able to source a solution to the problem or need. 54% of the requests were closed with a successful outcome within 4 weeks.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION:

2023-2024 marks the first full year since the adoption of Monmouthshire's 5-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to tackle homelessness in the county. Progress is being made against the plan to make homelessness rare, brief, and unrepeatable. The strategy cements previous work to increase the prevention of homelessness; minimise any time spent in temporary accommodation when homelessness cannot be prevented; and to provide timely support at the level and type required for households to maintain settled accommodation. The Prevention Officers offer support around affordability, property searches and landlord mediation, and achieved a prevention success rate of 71% for 2023-2024, an increase on 50% from the previous year.

- The Discretionary Homelessness Prevention Fund has remained available to the Housing Options Team for the 2023-2024 financial year.
- Monmouthshire Council continues to enjoy a positive relationship with the Registered Social Landlords operating in the county. Allocations to homeless households remain amongst the highest in Wales and there has been a recent review of some policies that have been identified as barriers to some households obtaining settled accommodation.
- The council agreed to supplement the availability of temporary accommodation through purchasing homes and repurposing existing Council owned assets subject to Cabinet approval.
- The Council has completed the purchase of one property and one former agricultural property is due to be repurposed as temporary accommodation. In addition, a former care home has been approved for adaptation and use as temporary accommodation as well as providing a hub for other community organisations. This provision should become operational, subject to planning approval, in 2024-2025 and will benefit from the additional resources of an in-house support worker and scheme manager.

PREVENT: (Counter Terrorism and Radicalisation)

The majority of referrals into Monmouthshire are from schools – reflecting the positive impact of radicalisation awareness training to ensure that schools are aware of when to make a referral.

10 referrals were received in 2003 [six of which were from schools] and a further 4 between January – April 2024. Referrals were received across the year groups from Year 7 to Year 13; there were no referrals received for younger pupils. Adult referrals can come from a range of sources.

Concerns often start with children accessing the internet, which was particularly the case coming out of the pandemic. When referrals are initially received the Police visit families and talk about internet access, particularly around the dark web. The threshold of concern around an individual's need is high for them to be adopted by the Channel Panel, and Police check, for example, whether an individual has been previously open to a 'Pursue' intervention.

There has been a recent emergence of Autism traits in the referrals received. An Autism provider has been engaging to work with those people who are identified at potential risk. This also provides a level of assessment / understanding around behaviours and autistic traits.

There is a specific issue with Llanarth Court, which is a medium secure independent Psychiatric Unit in Monmouthshire. English Health commissioners can place an individual at Llanarth at very short notice, some of whom have been identified as very high risk of radicalisation. The Forensic Psychiatrist from Llanarth attends all Chanel meetings to discuss the level of treatment being received, and there are good links maintained with the Counter Terrorism Police Unit.

There has been positive work undertaken with Housing to ensure people's needs are assessed thoroughly and that they are then supported appropriately.

Safeguarding is always at the forefront when cases are explored, as inevitably there are some extremely vulnerable people. For those who are managed via Channel Panel we review each closed case after 6 months. Of those cases reviewed after 6 months, there have been no re-referrals into Channel due to further concerns around radicalisation. This indicates the effectiveness of the interventions made in reducing harm in this area.

4. ROBUST PROTECTION**SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5****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 has seen significant increase in demand at the ‘front door’ of children’s safeguarding services. Despite this, performance in meeting statutory timescales for responding to referrals has been maintained. More now needs to be done to understand what is driving safeguarding referrals, demand and resource requirement.

In adult safeguarding, improvements made to ensure safeguarding enquiries are undertaken in a timely way has been sustained.

The physical presence of some partner agencies within the safeguarding hub has been reduced due to budgetary pressures. The Safeguarding Hub is using digital means to ensure that multi-agency decision making and sharing of information remains in place to support good practice.

Care Inspectorate Wales Service Inspection of Children’s Services (Feb 24) reported that the leadership team are well informed of the pressures within the system, and that they had put in appropriate measures in order to respond effectively. The inspectorate commented positively on the practice framework, Keeping Children Safe and on the positive practice that was observed within child protection and with families who were within a legal (pre-court) framework.

A temporary post has been created in children’s services to promote good safeguarding practice in ensuring statutory child protection timescales are met and to support the roll out of the ‘Keeping Children Safe’ practice framework.

Children’s Services continues to experience challenges in locating appropriate placements for children due to insufficiency of placements and instability within the provider market. There are plans in place to increase the Council’s in-house provision.

For these reasons we have moved the evaluation score from 4 to 5

KEY STRENGTHS:	NEXT STEPS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The safeguarding hub uses digital platforms to ensure both Child and Adult safeguarding processes are managed effectively through multi-agency arrangements and within statutory timescales. - The revised Child Protection practice framework ‘Keeping Children Safe’ - Ongoing commitment to improving the quality of practice with key focus on development and training for practitioners. - Adult safeguarding has maintained improvements in compliance to timescales and there is an increased understanding of adult safeguarding within the service and across partner agencies. - Services are developed in response to priority risks (e.g. Family Resolution Team). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertake an analysis of demand data at both front door of adults and children to identify trends, resource need and to inform partnership approaches. - Undertaken further planned engagement with Adult Services to promote safeguarding statutory compliance and understanding - Utilise a 12-month Implementation Officer post to support the roll out of Keeping Children Safe practice framework and to support compliance with statutory timescales; - Appoint to Safeguarding Service Manager position - Recruit a 4th Service Manager to take forward the development of Monmouthshire Children and young people placements. - Review of grant funded services to understand risks and resource need post 2025. - Implement the Safeguarding QA Framework

PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK:**

The CIW inspection report notes that *“overall, safeguarding is understood at many levels of the organisation. The local authority has a local policy for Keeping Children Safe within the child protection process. This supports internal staff to have a clear understanding of local guidance and standards. It includes arrangements for managers and leaders to have line of sight on the lived experience of children.”*

Adult’s and Children’s safeguarding practitioners continue to have a physical presence within the hub with attendance on separate days by representatives of Women’s Aid, Space Wellbeing, Police, and Safeguarding in Education. Health have reduced their physical presence and created a shared regional resource from a central point. CIW Inspection Feb ‘24 reported that there remains a commitment from all safeguarding agencies to work together via digital technology to ensure the safe sharing of information and compliance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

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

CHILDREN’S SERVICES:

This year has seen an unprecedented increase in referrals to the Early Help and Assessment Team (EHAT) who form the ‘front door’ entry point into Children Services. There was a 22% increase in Duty to Reports (DTR’s) into Children Service’s, against a national rise of 11% across Wales. Of this 22% increase, 68% were considered of a Child Protection in nature. The impacts of this increase was noted in the CIW inspection (Feb 2024) which reported that whilst Child Protection Enquiries were completed in statutory timescales and children safeguarded there was less time for strength-based engagement with parents and children.

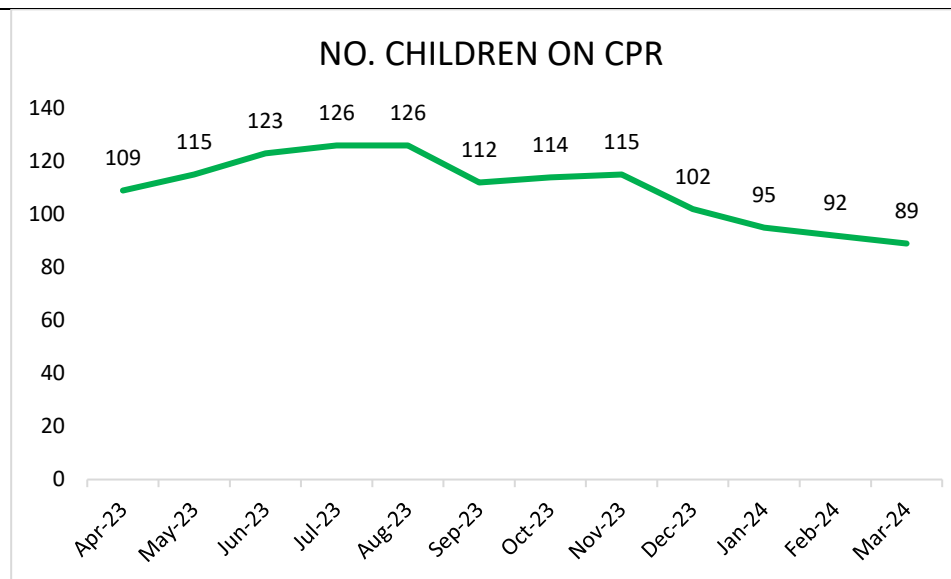
There has been a year-on-year increase in reports to both the EHAT since the Covid pandemic with limited increase in resource to manage the demand; however, the Service continues to demonstrate that 100% of reports are appropriately managed within the 24hour statutory guidance.

The Police remain the source of the highest number of DTR's, however, there has been a significant increase in reports from Health and Education. To better understand the increase in DTRs, a review of demand at the front door is scheduled to commence May 2024 with the appointment to a Safeguarding Implementation Lead and the recruitment of a new Safeguarding Service Manager in process to assist with this.

During the period, 67% of Child Protection visits were undertaken within statutory timescales against a national average of 73%. Whilst noting this did not mean that children subject to a Child Protection Plan were not being visited or safeguarded, improving statutory compliance is a key recommendation of the inspection report. This has led to an increased focus on digital technology to support the recording of statutory visits, as well as increased training and mentoring for social workers.

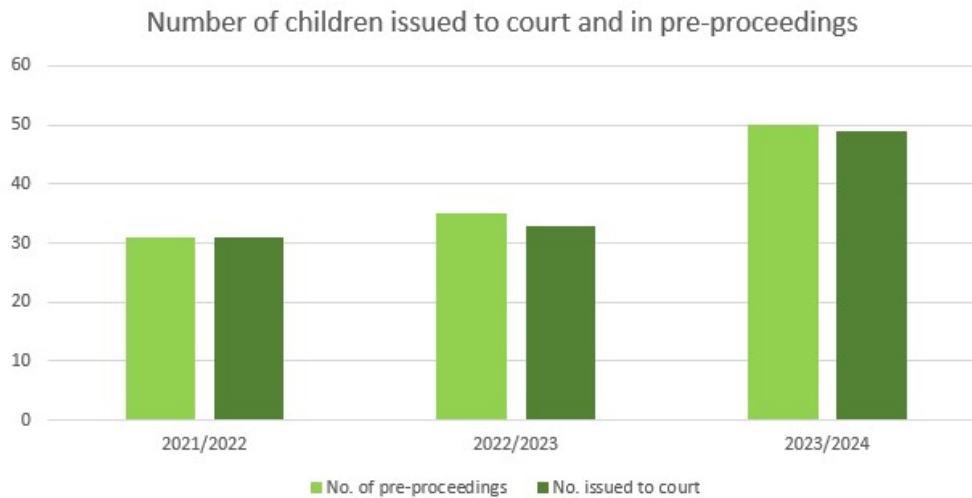
CHILD PROTECTION:

- During this period there was a reduction in the number of children on the Child Protection Register at year end, however this fluctuates each month as children, sometimes large sibling groups, either come onto, or off, the register.
- In some cases, preventative work of around 12-weeks is undertaken with families so that if it is possible to do so, children can be safely diverted from formal child protection arrangements. 210 children received this support during the year, with 122 children's cases either closing or stepping down to universal services. 56 children were transferred to the longer-term teams for continued support with 32 children subsequently progressing to Child Protection Conference.
- The graph below demonstrates number of children registered over the year.



- In 78% of cases, children were de-registered because of a reduction of risk rather than matters escalating through Care Proceedings and/or children becoming Looked After.
- Emotional Abuse is now the highest category of registration which relates to the impact of Domestic Abuse, Interparental conflict, Substance Misuse of parents and parental mental health. Child neglect remains the 2nd largest category of registration.
- Sexual abuse has always presented as a category with the least number of children registered, although under reporting is likely to mask prevalence. There had been an increase in child protection cases where parents [normally fathers] are under investigation or convicted of online offences, such as possession of indecent images of children.
- The Safeguarding Unit lost 2 key members of the team later in the year which led to a reliance on agency chairs being utilised for Child Protection Conferences. This led to a lack of consistency in the quality of engagement with families by the chair during the conference process. These posts are in the recruitment process.
- Delays in some conferences occur when the right agencies relevant to the family's case are not able to attend. This is something that is being looked at through the regional Safeguarding Board.

Children Services continue to experience increased levels of complexity for children and families, which is indicated by an increase in pre-proceedings work and numbers of applications made to court in order to keep children safe.



For Children on the Child Protection Register and in pre legal proceedings CIW Inspection report (Feb 24) notes: “leaders *provide constructive challenge to support consideration of all options. Social workers consistently create assessment plans which support analysis of the core risks relating to threshold, the impact on the child, and parental capacity to change. This **positive practice** supports robust analysis and proportionate decision making in the latter stages of a child’s journey through safeguarding processes*”

CHILDREN’S PLACEMENTS:

Sufficiency of Children’s Placement remains a key risk for the Council with instability within the provider market and on-going uncertainty as to the full impact of the new Social Care and Health Bill.

Insufficiency can mean that children are not as well matched to placements as we would want. Insufficiency of foster carers has meant that some children are entering residential children's homes, when the need is actually for a foster placement.

On occasions the service has had to operate an unregulated OWR placement (Outside of Welsh Regulation) to ensure that the child is safeguarded, whilst an alternative registered placement can be found. Children Services proactively engage with CIW in these situations.

Children Services have improved the way that the service responds in situations where an OWR placement is required through temporarily redirecting resources and co-ordinating multiagency support. The service has developed a 'bank' of trained support workers who can support children within OWR homes at short notice. This allows Children's Services to ensure the staff managing the placements are appropriately trained and supervised, and work collaboratively to meet the needs of the child whilst placed. In 2023/24, 5 children were placed temporarily in OWR arrangements prior to transitioning to a regulated placement.

In response to the challenges of placements, and in line with the Government's Elimination of Profit agenda, the service has developed a placement development strategy and is planning to appoint an additional Service Manager to support this area of work.

ADULT SAFEGUARDING:

The Adult Safeguarding Team remains relatively stable. Since the last evaluation the team has consolidated systems and process changes implemented in 2022/2023. This has helped to improve communication, recording and efficiency within adult safeguarding.

- In 2023/2024, 84.3% (334 of 396) of adult safeguarding enquiries were completed within 7 working days from receipt of the DTR compared to 86.4% last year. Although this is a slight reduction on last year, the improvements made in collaboration and partnership working across Adult Services and with relevant stakeholders, to ensure enquiries are undertaken in a timely way has been sustained.
- The number of referrals made and accepted to Adult Safeguarding has reduced slightly since the last evaluation, (from 418 to 396). However, the level of activity remains fairly consistent.
- The Team continues to improve how reports are responded to supporting and promoting preventative practice where it is safe to do so.
- The Adult Safeguarding Team, in collaboration with the Workforce Development Team, has developed a suite of Safeguarding Practice Exchange presentations on various topics to address learning needs. Further take up now needs to be promoted. The presentations developed are now also being taken forward by the wider workforce development agenda of the Gwent Safeguarding Board.

- The Team has continued to see an increase in relation to safeguarding concerns about People in a Position of Trust (see Safe Workforce). This increase is also seen within the other Gwent Local Authorities.

5. SAFE SERVICES – delivered through commissioning arrangements, grants, partnerships and volunteering

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4	
<u>WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?</u>	
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 practice within Licensing, Public Protection and Passenger Transport Units. Outcomes from SAFEs indicate that safe commissioning and good safeguarding practice with contractors is in place within schools and other services within the Council. Arrangements are in place to support safeguarding within volunteering and third sector organisations.	
The score remains at 4.	
KEY STRENGTHS:	NEXT STEPS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commissioning team and the Safeguarding Unit have positive relations and the 'Provider Performance' and 'Escalating Concerns' processes continue to work well. - The processes for reviewing commissioned services within Children and Adult Services are well defined and embedded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of SAFES to continue learning and improvement in safe commissioning practice within Directorates. - Undertake a further check to ensure that Hiring and Letting processes adhere to Safeguarding policy.

<p>- There are regular safeguarding meetings with individual directorates to offer ongoing advice and guidance.</p>	
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PROGRESS AND EVIDENCE:

COMMISSIONING & QUALITY ASSURANCE

Children’s Services

Standard quality assurance monitoring processes continued during the 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, and revisited 6 monthly - physical visits will occur as needed on a risk assessed basis. The national commissioning consortium supports good exchange of information about provider performance and any safeguarding concerns across local authorities.

During the 23 – 24 period we had:

- 1 Disability Support Service Provider in Provider Performance this concluded positive in April 2024
- 1 Residential Home in Provider Performance which is ongoing

Adults Services

Standard quality assurance monitoring processes continued during the 23-24 year for all commissioned Adult Social Care placements. For in-county placements this includes an annual monitoring visit and one to 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 ensure that monitoring occurs. Our regional commissioning group ensures that there is good exchange of information about provider performance and so that any concerns are responded to.

During the 23 – 24 period we had:

- 1 younger adult nursing home – managed through provider performance and then escalating concerns – the home was closed in April 2024
- 1 older adult residential provider in Provider Performance – this is ongoing

VOLUNTEERS: Regular volunteers in Monmouthshire are subject to the same recruitment procedures as the paid workforce. In the 2023-24, Be Community (part of the Wellbeing Team) provided substantial support to 244 volunteers and 135 community organisations in Monmouthshire, enhancing their resilience and sustainable growth through a diverse array of training which includes mandatory safeguarding training. A total of 38 training courses were provided to volunteers. 2 Voluntary workers were subject to the Professional Concerns Safeguarding processes in 23-24, where the concerns were “Substantiated”. Appropriate steps were then taken to ensure that the risks posed by these individuals were mitigated.

LICENSING and PASSENGER TRANSPORT:

Good safeguarding practice is embedded within licensing services and the Passenger Transport Unit (PTU). Licensing & Regulatory (L&R) Committee members are trained and competent in making decisions about suitability of taxi drivers, etc. New Members in the Licensing and Regulatory Committee were also trained prior to dealing with cases brought before them, to ensure that only ‘fit and proper’ drivers are licensed.

DBS checks are now required every 6 months for drivers, rather than 3 years. This also includes operators who have access to book records or dispatch vehicles. This was implemented October 2021 and continues. Drivers are required to undertake safeguarding training which must be updated every 3 years when they reapply for their licence.

Responsible Authority meetings are well attended and continue to review any licensed premises with safety issues.

HIRING AND LETTING:

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy highlights that managers have responsibility for ensuring organisations letting or hiring rooms are operating to clear safeguarding policies, such that would reflect the Monmouthshire Safeguarding policy. This recognises that when rooms or buildings are let by the Council for clubs or activities, the public may well assume the same safeguarding standards are in place. There is a model hire agreement for schools for when other organisations use or hire sites. This includes reference to safeguarding standards such as having a

safeguarding policy, DBS checks being in place, safeguarding training and regulatory bodies etc. Arrangements are monitored by Governing Bodies.

Physical site security and incident planning:

School site security continues to be a paramount consideration for schools and services operated by MonLife – ensuring that those on site are safeguarded and that effective arrangements are in place.

In January 2024 the review of the Schools Critical Incident Plan (SCIP) was launched, and every school attended the launch event. Following this, each school reviewed their SCIP and reinforced how the arrangements were embedded into schools – for example ‘safe and secure’ (school lockdown) is routinely practiced, which is the opposite to evacuation procedures.

Schools assure themselves in relation to site safeguards and security via the SAFE assessment –with some sections amended to reinforce Estyn standards and monitoring arrangements.

APPENDIX 3 - SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITY PLAN [2023 – 2024]:

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING	NOTES
GOOD GOVERNANCE				
Regional SAFE roll out 2023 – 2025.	All Directorates	March 2025		Commenced
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		Modern Day Slavery Statement almost at completed with one further meeting scheduled between Commissioning and Safeguarding Unit (bring forward) Policy amended in line with new National Training Standards (Nov '23)
Consideration for further training and understanding of safeguarding priorities for all elected members.	Training Unit	March 2024		Awaiting module under the National Standards Training framework and will be addressed via this mechanism (bring forward)
SAFE WORKFORCE				
Ongoing development of 'Thingy' to ensure training records are centrally managed	Systems and Data Team	March 2024		On-going
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		This is included as part of Thingy development.
Regional Safeguarding Leads will continue to meet to review the Practitioner	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2024		A task and finish group is established under the regional board to look at this. This action will be managed via that process.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING	NOTES
Concerns process and review the effectiveness of the “outcomes” of the process				
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront	Systems and Data Team	March 2024		Sequenced to 24-25 due to ongoing developments in other areas (Bring Forward)
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, e.g. Education, Foster Carers and Health professionals	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2024		(Bring Forward)
Training Standards to be considered from a Monmouthshire perspective. Consideration to adopt this national framework.	Safeguarding Unit WASG Training Unit	March 2024		Adopted and policy amended
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH				
Development of VAWDASV refresher course for all staff and to be rolled out across the Council.	Training Unit	March 2024		VAWDASV training is incorporated into Thingi mandatory training requirements and will be reviewed alongside the National Safeguarding Training Framework 24-25
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		This will be achieved via Thingi

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING	NOTES
Remainder of Directorates to be included in Modern Day Slavery training.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024		This is ongoing.
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		Business as usual
Wellbeing Team to evaluate the effectiveness of their support to inform future decisions about the Team.	Wellbeing Team	March 2024		Wellbeing Team has undergone significant changes over the course of the last 12 months. The team, known now as The Community Development Team, operate geographically across the County, with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention
The Modern-Day slavery statement needs to be completed and embedded across the council.	Procurement Safeguarding Unit to offer advice and guidance	March 2024		Modern Day Slavery Statement almost at completion; one further meeting scheduled with Commissioning and Safeguarding Unit.
NRM pilot and change in threshold to be understood in greater depth.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024		Pilot on-going, this will be taken forward at a national level
ROBUST PROTECTION				
The Hub will be evaluated following successful tender, which is being commissioned by Gwent Police.	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Police	March 2024		This is the remit of Gwent Police; hubs are now embedded with West and East oversight boards established.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING	NOTES
Continue to expand the Hub to include further agencies.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024		This remains on going and has been enhanced through digital platforms.
Continued improvement of the Section 126 enquiries being held within timescale through further discussion with other professionals and agencies, such as Health.	Safeguarding Unit [Adult] Health Safeguarding	March 2024		Improved performance and compliance to statutory timescales has been maintained over 2 years.
Safeguarding Unit to continue improving Quality Assurance arrangements and identify workshops for practice improvement.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024		This is being taken forward via the implementation lead.
Increased development of Safeguarding understanding across Adult Services.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024		This has been achieved with practitioner modules being developed.
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 2024		There are strong working relationships between Children’s Services and Commissioning. In regard to Adult Services there are improved relationships and understanding with the Commissioning Team and better attendance at all levels of Safeguarding meetings.
Commissioning to review services on provider list and provider feedback.	Commissioning	March 2024		Continuous review process; ongoing.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING	NOTES
Further promotion and understanding of SAFE process across the whole Local Authority.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2024		Ongoing, and will be reinforced during next roll out
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		Ongoing – brought forward into Good Governance
Continued learning and improvement with Directorates to further embed good Safeguarding practice.	Safeguarding Unit All Directorates	March 2024		WASG is used as a mechanism to identify any learning.
Evaluation of the Wellbeing Team.	Wellbeing Team	March 2024		Wellbeing Team has undergone significant changes over the course of the last 12 months. The team, known now as The Community Development Team, now operates geographically across the County, with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention.

APPENDIX 4 - SAFEGUARDING PROPOSED ACTIVITY PLAN [2024 – 2025]:

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
GOOD GOVERNANCE		
Regional SAFE roll out 2023 – 2025.	Directorate Leads Safeguarding Unit	March 2025
Directorates to develop increased autonomy in completing their individual SAFEs, with advice and guidance to be sought from the Safeguarding Unit where necessary.	Directorate Leads	March 2025
Recruitment of a Safeguarding Service Manager.	Head of Children’s Services	July 2024
Ensure correct link between Thinqi and the implementation of the National Training Standards to include Safeguarding training for Elected Members and School Governors	Workforce Development Team and Safeguarding Unit	March 2025
Continue to develop the core data set as a standard agenda item for WASG to ensure whole council scrutiny.	Safeguarding Unit	Sept 2024
SAFE WORKFORCE		
Thinqi system to be fully implemented across all areas of the council to support full and accurate production of safeguarding training data.	Systems and Data Team Workforce Dev Team Safeguarding Unit	Dec 2024
National Training Standards to be embedded with Thinqi	Workforce Development Team and Safeguarding Unit	March 2025
To review and implement any actions arising from the national task and finish group developing further guidance around Practitioner Concerns.	Safeguarding Unit Safeguarding Board	March 2025
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront (brought forward from 2023-24)	Systems and Data Team HR	Jan 25
Training and Guidance to be developed around understanding of Practitioner Concerns, for those who are employers and those who are	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2025

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
at greater risk of being discussed in the arena, e.g. Education, Foster Carers and Health professionals (brought forward from 2023 -24)		
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH		
Strengthen the links between the Wellbeing Team, the Safeguarding Unit and MEG.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2025
MEG to work with partners both regionally and locally to develop transitional safeguarding to support young adults vulnerable to exploitation	Safeguarding Unit	March 2025
Complete the Modern-Day slavery statement and update the Corporate Safeguarding Policy	Safeguarding Unit and Community Development Service	Dec 2024
Support Gwent Police in recruiting for MARAC Chairs across the 5 LA's (to support consistency of practice)	Procurement Safeguarding Unit to offer advice and guidance	Dec 2024
Include Neuro Diversity in the training profile for PREVENT		March 2025
Implement Thinqi to support compliance with VAWDASV training	Safeguarding Unit	Dec 2024
ROBUST PROTECTION		
Undertake an analysis of demand data at both front door of adults and children to identify trends, resource need and to inform partnership approaches.	Safeguarding Unit	Oct 2024
Undertake further planned engagement with Adult Services to promote safeguarding statutory compliance and understanding	Safeguarding Unit [Adult] Health Safeguarding	Dec 2024
Utilise a 12-month Implementation Officer post to support the roll out of Keeping Children Safe practice framework and to support compliance with statutory timescales	Safeguarding Leads Children Services	July 2024

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
Appoint to Safeguarding Service Manager position	Head of Children's Services	July 2024
Recruit a 4th Service Manager to take forward the development of Monmouthshire Children and young people placements.	Head of Children's Services	July 2024
Review grant funded services to understand risks and resource need post 2025	Head of Children's Services	Dec 2024
Implement the Safeguarding QA Framework	Safeguarding Service Manager	Dec 2024
SAFE SERVICES		
Use of SAFES to continue learning and improvement in safe commissioning practice within Directorates.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2025
Undertake a further check to ensure that Hiring and Letting processes adhere to Safeguarding policy.	WASG	March 2025