

THE EVALUATION:

1. GOOD GOVERNANCE

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5

WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?

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

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:

The chief officer ensures that live safeguarding issues are raised with leaders in the council through SLT and Cabinet. There are weekly meetings between the Chief Officer and the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services. The Chief Officer and the Head of Children’s Services meet with the Leader of the Council bi-monthly to ensure safeguarding issues, and risks and trends are discussed or escalated as required.

The role of the Scrutiny Committee within Monmouthshire County Council provides an additional layer of governance in relation to safeguarding across the Council. The Performance & Overview Committee scrutinises the Council’s performance in delivering corporate objectives outlined in its corporate plan. The committee scrutinises the annual safeguarding evaluation report prior to its presentation at Full Council.

SAFEGUARDING AUDIT FRAMEWORK EVALUATION [SAFE]:

- The SAFE programme has been completed for the 2023-2025 cycle. This ensures that all directorates have the opportunity to conduct a structured assessment of safeguarding practice within individual service areas.
- A programme of supporting Directorates to become more autonomous in managing safeguarding in their area has been facilitated by the Safeguarding Unit and the Directorate Safeguarding Leads. This has supported the development of a digital platform for the access to and safe storage of the SAFES’s allowing wider oversight of issues and compliance by Senior Management and the Safeguarding Unit. A programme of audits has been drawn up to support Quality Assurance over the next 2-year period

SAFEGUARDING CORPORATE POLICY:

- The Safeguarding Corporate Policy was reviewed in January 2024 and subsequently updated to include the Modern-Day Slavery statement, which was endorsed by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] in April 2025. We will continue to review the Safeguarding Corporate Policy on a two-yearly basis or as required.

GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD [GSB]:

- There remains strong links between the Gwent Safeguarding Boards and The Safeguarding Unit, with key members representing Monmouthshire on all Subgroups. The Chief Officer, Jane Rodgers, co-chairs the Board and Head of Service, Diane Corrister represents Monmouthshire on the Board and on the Case Review Group.
- The Gwent Safeguarding Board continues to provide oversight and accountability for all partner agencies in ensuring effective safeguarding across the region. The board leads on regional projects such as the Child Sexual Abuse action plan, implementation of the National Training Standards and the development of regional safeguarding procedures.

WHOLE AUTHORITY SAFEGUARDING GROUP [WASG]:

- WASG has continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis to ensure Directorate Leads are appraised of Safeguarding developments. The Core Data Set for whole authority safeguarding has been reviewed and updated to include Commissioning and Adult Safeguarding, and there are plans to include Harmful Sexual Behaviour [HSB]. This allows WASG members to interrogate safeguarding activity and outcomes through a data lens.

CARE INSPECTORATE WALES ACTION PLAN [Children Services April 24-March25]:

- Feedback from the Care Inspectorate Wales [CIW] Inspection [February 2024] was provided to WASG members; progress against the Action Plan was subsequently presented to WASG on 10 September 2024 for oversight. The Action Plan has been fully implemented with compliance to the statutory timescales for visits to children on the Child Protection Register, and the timescales for Initial Conferences now well above the National averages. There is improved oversight and analysis of data via the Children Services Data Management Clinic [DMC], which reviews the statutory obligations of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and levels of compliance. Issues of demand impacting practice quality have been managed via more a more robust Quality Assurance Framework.

ANALYSIS

Despite the ongoing financial pressures, and changes in Directorate Lead Officers, Monmouthshire County Council has maintained strong safeguarding practices. This has been facilitated in part by key appointments to the Safeguarding Unit making it more robust, and a year-on-year improvement in Quality Assurance and reporting mechanisms. The move to increase Directorate autonomy in managing their own safeguarding through the SAFES is positive and reinforces that safeguarding is everybody's business. Oversight and support will be facilitated via the digital platform by the Safeguarding Unit. The Council's commitment to safeguarding is evident through its reviews of policies, updated training, and effective collaboration with regional partners demonstrating that Safeguarding practice across the council continues to evolve and develop meeting the challenges and trends as they emerge.

2. SAFE WORKFORCE

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4

WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?

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

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:

SAFE RECRUITMENT:

- A new digital platform was introduced in January 2025 [Talentlink] to encompass recruitment for the Council. Talentlink has been configured to assist compliance with the Safeguarding Policy in relation to safer recruitment, which include the mechanisms to ensure staff requiring DBS or Risk Assessments are managed effectively.
- New Services which have been developed including Micro Carers and Children's Residential Care Home Staff have all worked within the Monmouthshire Safe Recruitment Processes.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING:

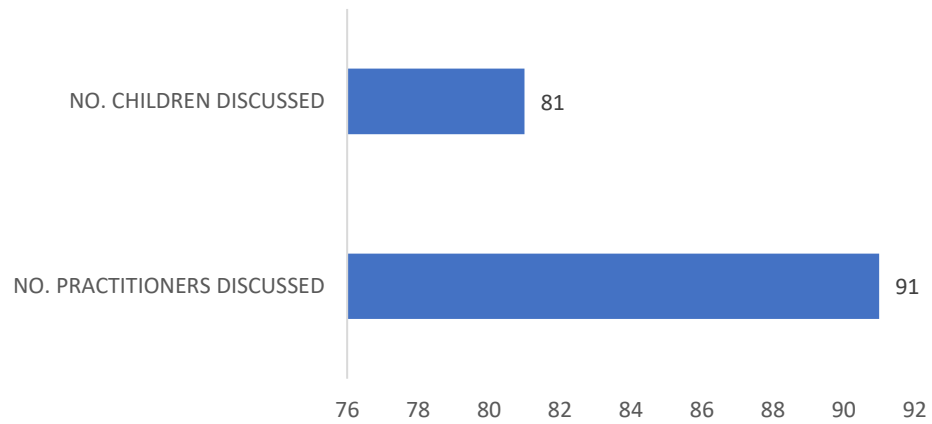
- Following the full implementation of Thingi [the council's digital learning platform] and the National Safeguarding Training Standards, a working group was set up to assign each job role across the Council to the appropriate safeguarding training group. MCC Workforce Development have successfully completed this exercise for the Social Care and Health Directorate and are now supporting the Corporate Organisation Training Team to achieve this for the rest of the workforce in partnership with the Safeguarding Unit.
- Every staff member in the Council will need to undertake the Social Care Wales National **Group A** training, which is a digital learning course embedded into Thingi. Both Corporate Organisation Training and Workforce Development Team are continuously reviewing the completion of this online module to ensure the Council are compliant in this mandatory training for staff.
- Monmouthshire have adopted Social Care Wales National **Group B** training package. The Social Care Workforce Development Team will be rolling out monthly training sessions for the Social Care and Health workforce and the relevant partners. There are further plans for a Train the Trainer approach within the rest of the authority to ensure those who require Group B training can access it.
- Pilot courses for **Group C** for both Adult and Children's Services are underway via the Regional Safeguarding Board. A Train the Trainer event to deliver Group C training was scheduled and went ahead in June 2025. Enquiries are being made with all organisations whether there are any staff who would want to support the delivery of the training on behalf of the Board.
- In the absence of a standardised training package there has been ongoing collaboration at national and regional levels to identify learning and development

opportunities that meet **Group D, E and F** [Elected Members and School Governors] ensuring learning for practitioners within these groups is relevant to their individual roles.

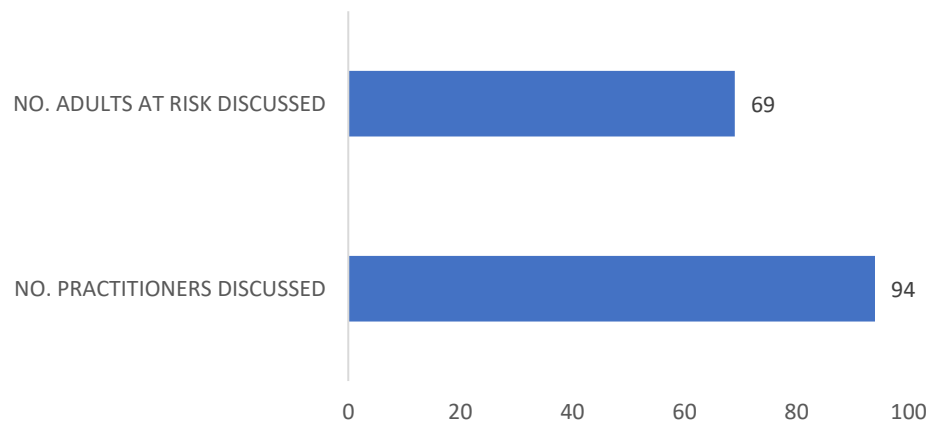
PRACITITONER CONCERNS / ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THOSE IN A POSITION OF TRUST (PCM):

- The Safeguarding Unit has overall responsibility for the management of the PCM process in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. This year there has been an increase in referrals related to both Adult and Children safeguarding. Within Childrens Service, there has been a 34% increase in cases compared to last year and a 6% increase for Adult Safeguarding. This is a trend across Gwent and is considered to relate to increased awareness if safeguarding responsibilities in partnership agencies.
- There is no change within the primary professional setting for referrals to PCM with the majority of concerns relating to children linked to educational staff and within Adult Safeguarding, health and care staff.
- Within this period, 20 cases have been ongoing for 4+ months. The length of time relates to delays in the Criminal Justice process that includes Police investigations and the response time from the Crown Prosecution Service [CPS].
- For all cases within the PCM process, and particularly for cases ongoing with police investigations, there is an impact on both the individual and the employer. The welfare of the individual remains a key priority within the process. If individuals are suspended from their duties, this can have a significant operational or financial impact.
- Whilst there is a limit to how much the PCM Chair can influence the timescale of investigations, there continues to be good communication between the Safeguarding Unit and the Safeguarding Hub within Heddli Gwent Police to escalate cases and resolve issues around timeliness and appropriateness of Police investigations where possible. There continues to be consideration for re-deployment of staff or alternative duties for those who are under investigation, with staff wellbeing remaining a focal point through the entirety of the process.
- The Safeguarding Unit works closely with the other Gwent Local Authorities to ensure consistent thresholds and case management. The Quality Assurance sub-group [part of the Gwent Safeguarding Board] will be considering Practitioner Concerns data from April 2025 onwards to explore themes and trends but also providing additional quality assurance of the PCM process within Gwent.
- Welsh Government are currently revising the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, Section 5 [PCM], which includes a review of threshold guidance, training and the devising of a complaint's procedure. There will be a consultation period with all regional Safeguarding Boards, which will involve Monmouthshire's Safeguarding Unit, scheduled for June 2025.

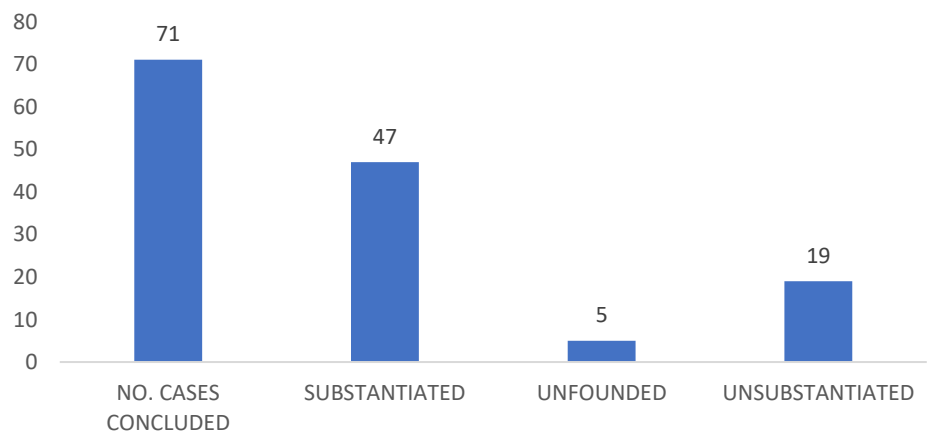
PCM - CHILDREN'S
01/04/24 - 31/03/25



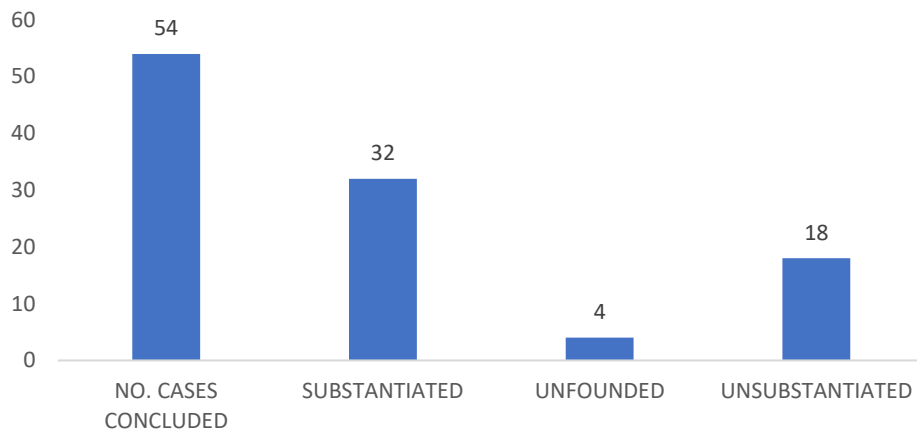
PCM - ADULTS
01/04/24 - 31/03/25



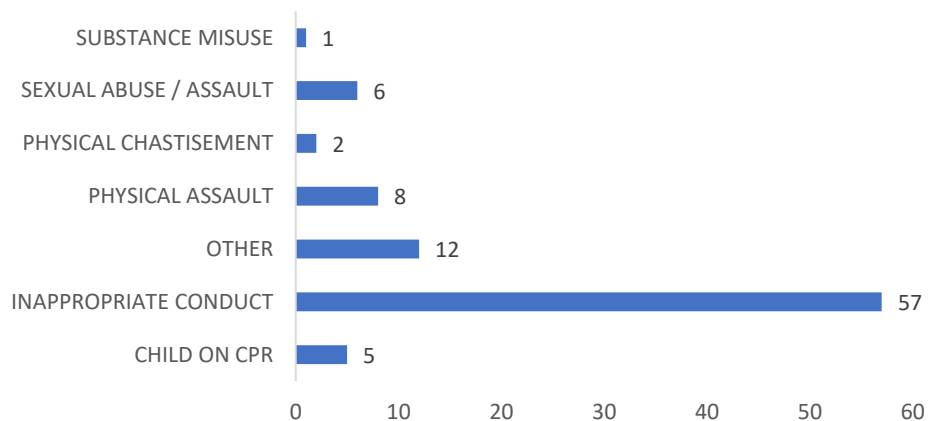
PCM - CHILDREN'S
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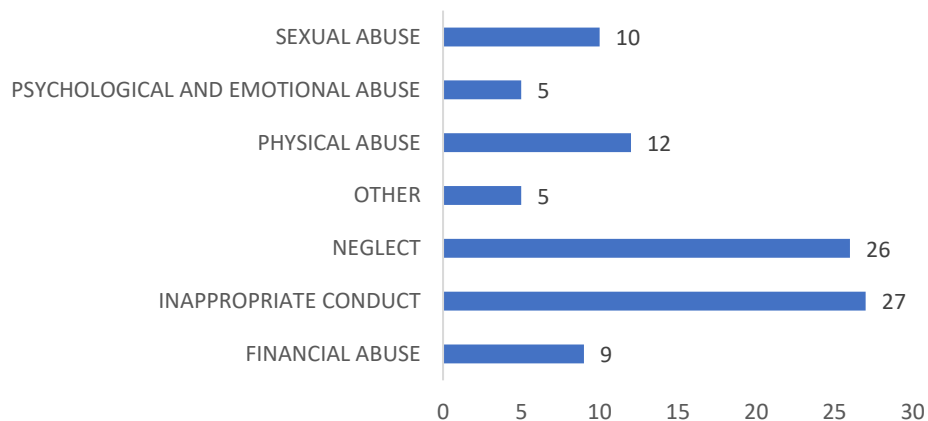
PCM - ADULTS
01/04/24 - 31/03/25



PRACTITIONER CONCERNS - CHILDENS
ALLEGATION / CONCERN



PRACTITIONER CONCERNS - ADULTS
ALLEGATION / CONCERN



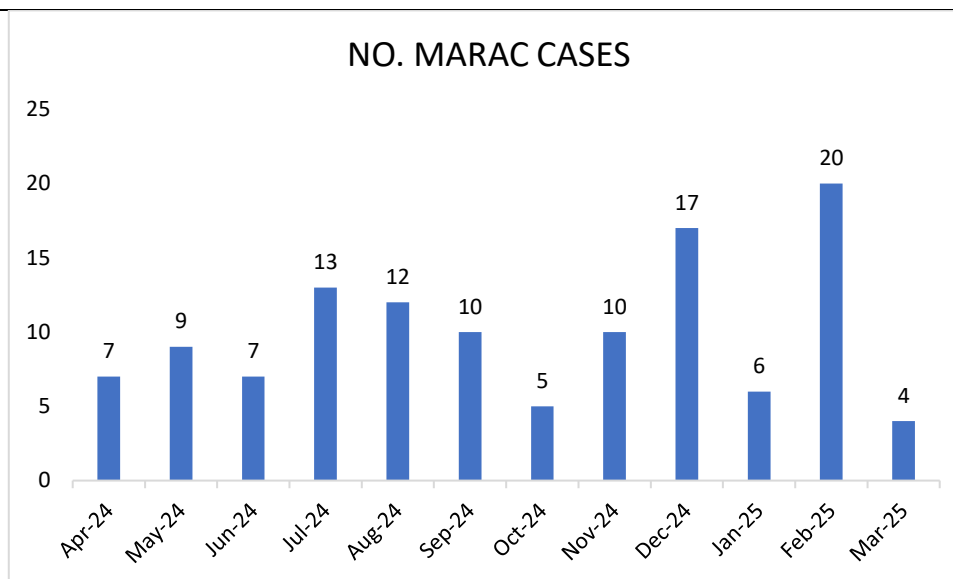
ANALYSIS

Monmouthshire Safe Recruitment processes continue to be applied robustly, with new services being compliant with the process. We have continued to develop Safeguarding Training and compliance is supported via both the SAFE process and via Thinqi training platform. This includes the ongoing development of National Safeguarding Training Standards where Monmouthshire is well advanced within the region in moving towards full implementation.

Our efforts in increasing safeguarding knowledge across the region is evidenced by the increase of Practitioner Concerns being referred into the Safeguarding Unit. The process for managing these referrals is well established and thresholds are consistently applied. Our strong relationship between the Unit and the Police help mitigate the impact of delays and HR act as strong partners to manage employment and welfare issues. The council collaborates with other Gwent Local Authorities to maintain consistent safeguarding practices.

3. PREVENTATIVE APPROACH

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5
<u>WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?</u> 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. We develop services at all levels aimed at preventing children from experiencing harm and supporting the development of parental understanding and skills so that children can safely exit statutory systems and access universal services for support.
<u>PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:</u> DOMESTIC ABUSE AND HIGH-RISK MANAGEMENT: • Monmouthshire remains committed to preventing Domestic Abuse within our communities. Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [VAWDASV] is mandatory training for all staff, and is included at induction, with a 3-year requirement for refresher training. • There has been an increase in completion of VAWDSV training this year following its inclusion on the Thinqi platform with 61% compliance with VAWDASV Group 1 and 93% compliance with VAWDASV Group 2 training (Ask and Act). • MARAC [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee] is chaired by the Safeguarding Service Manager and Heddli Gwent Police. In 24-25 there was a 19% decrease in the number of referrals into MARAC in Monmouthshire. There is no clear reason identified for the reduction. It is unknown at this time if this is a part of a wider trend within Gwent as the post of MARAC Co-ordinator has been vacant; this will now be reviewed by the Quality Assurance Group for the Gwent Safeguarding Board. • For cases which do not meet the high-risk threshold for MARAC, Monmouthshire apply a Sec 115 process under the Crime and Disorder Act to support victims of domestic abuse. This was recognised as good practice by Gwent Safeguarding Board, and the process is therefore going to be replicated across the other Gwent Local Authorities, supported by Monmouthshire's Community Safety Lead.



MONMOUTHSHIRE EXPLOITATION GROUP:

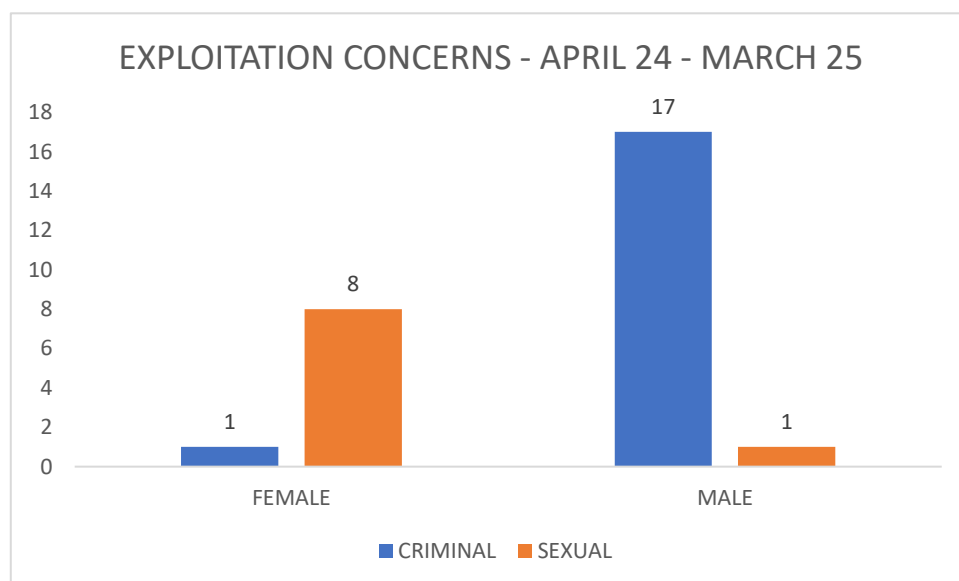
- Monmouthshire Exploitation Group [MEG] meets quarterly. Following changes of personnel within the Safeguarding Unit, a review of partnership membership was undertaken to support improved participation, safety and disruption planning. This has supported consistency, agency responses and allows for greater capacity to analyse trends, locations and perpetrators.
- A key priority for MEG is Transitional Safeguarding. Transitional Safeguarding seeks to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable young people as they transition from childhood to adulthood. This addresses the unique risks they face during this critical period and the harm associated with sexual and criminal exploitation.
- Attendance at MEG includes children and adult managers from within Social Care as well as the appropriate partner agencies.

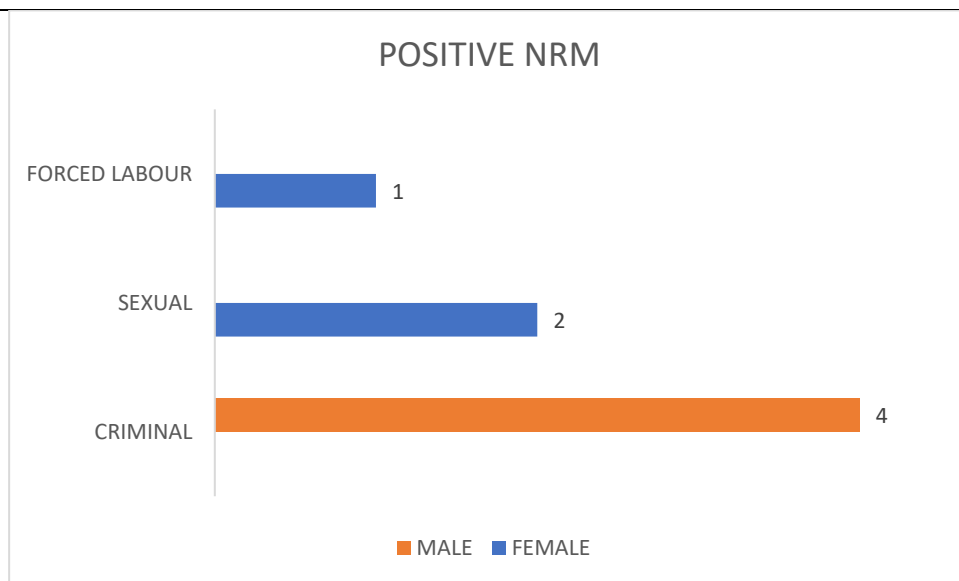
EXPLOITATION / MODERN DAY SLAVERY / NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM [NRM]:

- Appropriate information sharing and robust safety and support planning is in place for individuals who are at risk. There is consistent attendance from a variety of professionals at exploitation meetings including Education, Youth Offending Service [YOS], Youth Homelessness Co-ordinator, Engagement & Intervention Workers, Health and Police. To increase consistency and timeliness, Heddli Gwent Police now operate a Gwent wide approach in supporting identified children.
- A review of exploitation processes in Monmouthshire in 2023 streamlined the multiagency process for identification and case management of young people considered at risk of exploitation. The police recognised this as good practice and have requested that this streamlined process is rolled out across Gwent in 2025/26.
- Multi Agency Children's Exploitation [MACE] meeting continues to be held bi-monthly, chaired by Heddli Gwent Police, with attendance and participation from all partner agencies. Adults at Risk of Sexual Exploitation [AROSE] meetings are

currently managed on an individual basis. In light of the increased recognition of the issues regarding transitional Safeguarding Gwent Police have extended the age range of Operation Quartz from 18 years to 25 years.

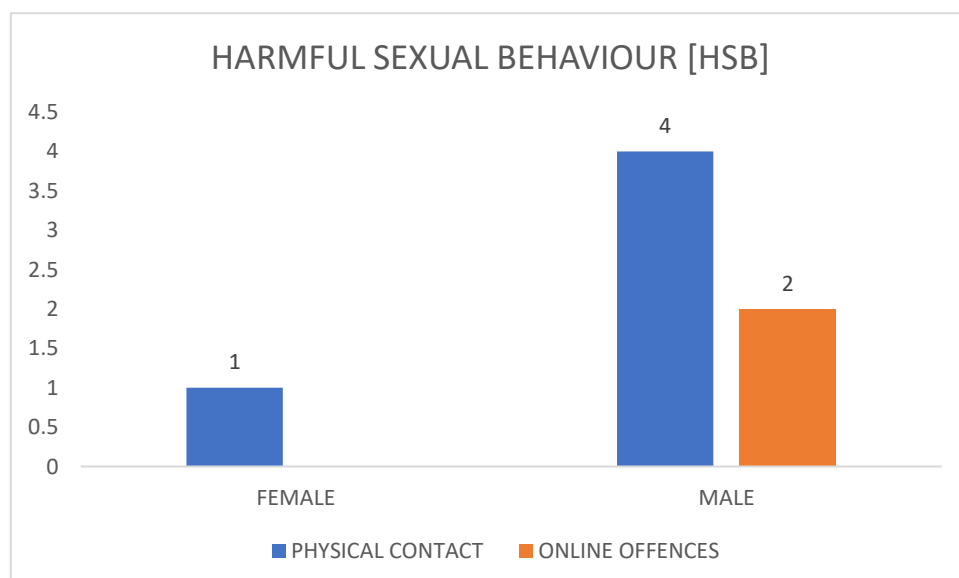
- In Monmouthshire, the majority of males discussed are subject to criminal exploitation whilst for females the majority are subject to sexual exploitation. More males are identified as being at risk than females. Notably, 90% of the children discussed attend mainstream Education.
- During this period, Monmouthshire has submitted 13 NRM referrals where a specific individual has been identified as the “exploiter”. This is an increase from 8 the previous year. Out of the 13 referrals, 7 cases were awarded a positive NRM status (4 males and 3 females]. The four males were referred under criminal exploitation and two females under sexual exploitation, with one female under Forced Labour. The NRM Home Office Co-ordinator continues to attend all exploitation meetings on a consultation basis; a second NRM Co-ordinator has been recruited who will attend the meetings going forward. This reflects the increase in demand and will allow the opportunity for analysis of the current pilot scheme - identifying any exploitation themes and trends within Monmouthshire in order to support next steps.





HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR [HSB]:

- As of January 2025, the Safeguarding Unit commenced recording data in relation to multi agency Strategy Meetings where children were identified as experiencing or perpetrating Harmful Sexual Behaviour whether physical/contact offences or online offences. These meetings ensure multiagency assessment of risk and robust case management and planning.
- During the period January – March 2025 there were six cases discussed, comprising of seven children. Of the six cases, the concerns have related to a mixture of both physical / contact and online concerns. All the cases have exited the HSB arena within three months.
- There continues to be positive communication between the Safeguarding Unit, Education and Youth Services to ensure appropriate risk assessments are completed and regularly reviewed to make sure a young person is not restricted disproportionately. An action going forward we will continue to record and produce HSB data to review thresholds, safeguards and any themes.

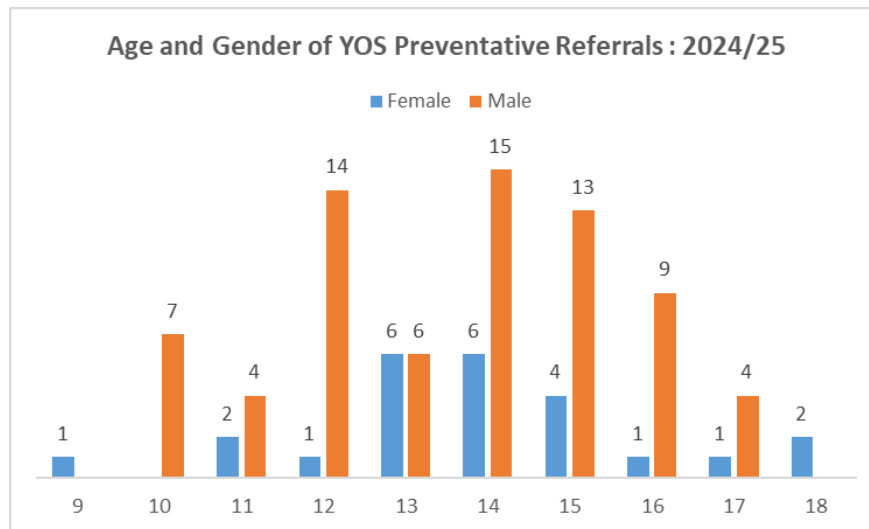


SAFEGUARDING IN SCHOOLS:

- This has been an intensive period of activity in relation to safeguarding training because of implementing the National Safeguarding Training Learning & Development Standards. This has required a review of all school and corporate Education posts to determine the level of safeguarding training necessary.
- There has been an identified increase in reported incidents of Harmful Sexual Behaviour [HSB] at both pre statutory and statutory thresholds. Training needs for Education providers have been reviewed and there is now a tiered approach to training around HSB and Child Sexual Abuse including how Education Practitioners can work with and support children who are harmed and those children who harm.
- This year saw funding loss from WG which resulted in the loss of the School Police Liaison Officer role. To mitigate this loss Education Practitioners and the Education Safeguarding Lead are currently linking in with the Neighbourhood Policing Teams as part of the safer school's arrangements and this positive link has been recognised in partnership meetings and Heddli Gwent Police forums.
- There has been an increase in the number of exclusions, both fixed term and permanent. There are strong links to the use of threatening or actual violence and the misuse of items to weaponise them, or the presence of bladed items in school. This is not a Monmouthshire specific pattern or trend but due to the increase in these concerns, a knife crime strategy is being identified through the Gwent Safeguarding Board, and a training offer has been developed to support schools in risk assessing and supporting those children causing harm or likely to be harmed. Training has also been devised locally around what approaches can be used when screening and searching for weapons and prohibited items, working closely with Community Safety and YOS colleagues.

YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE [YOS]:

- The YOS have reported an increase in the complexity of cases, particularly in relation to mental health, exploitation, and Adverse Childhood Experiences. Caseloads have remained stable with a slight increase, but a higher intensity of support is required per case. There has been improved multi-agency working, especially with the Safeguarding Unit and Children's Services, Education and CAMHS, to manage safeguarding risks. Many children continue to commit offences that are considered Violence Against the Person, predominately assaults but also a small increase in the number of children involved in Knife Crime.
- The Service has seen a disproportionate number of girls being referred to the YOS following Out of Court Disposals for Assaults and Shoplifting. The Service has continued to be an active participant in HSB, Exploitation, and Missing Children meetings, and the involvement has proven to be invaluable in addressing these challenging cases.



EARLY HELP SERVICES:

Throughout this review period, early intervention and prevention services have experienced rising complexity and demand across Family Group Conferencing [FGC], Mediation, and Building Stronger Families [BS F]. Each service reported increased referral pressures and growing family needs, particularly around mental health, neurodevelopmental concerns, school attendance and poor home conditions and family conflict.

This year has seen the introduction of Monmouthshire's Out of Hours Service [OoH] supporting children to remain at home whilst Child Protection investigations or assessments within the Court arena are undertaken. The development of this service has reduced the use of agency workers, increased consistency of service, and improved the management oversight of risk in the community. During the year, there was a total of 60 referrals supporting 91 children. There is a growing pressure on this service particularly around the need for 24 hr home supervision. Children Services and HR are reviewing the workforce structure and contracts to ensure it is compliant with legislative changes.

SPACE WELLBEING AND FAMILY SUPPORT PANEL (single point of access for children's emotional wellbeing):

- Monmouthshire SPACE Wellbeing and Family Support Panel continues to be a hub for early intervention and coordinated support for children, young people and their families. The total number of referrals into the service has steadily declined over the past 3 years from the peak demand seen in during Covid, with reductions likely due to post pandemic family stability, the positive impact of the CAMHS In-Reach Service for school mental health support and enhanced triage from improved referral screening via the Early Help and Assessment Team.
- Primary referral themes relate to anxiety, emotionally based school non-attendance, emotional dysregulation, sensory needs, traumatic stress, and non-complaint behaviours. Whilst there is a reduction in referrals the complexity of need has increased which has meant that there have been extended periods before allocation which increases the risk of escalation.

- Vacancies within partnership services/teams [e.g. the Inspire to Work Team] has impacted on support for 16+ at risk of being out of employment/education. However, 95% of referrals have been successfully allocated, ensuring appropriate and prioritised support. There have been no waiting lists for panel discussions and positive service outcomes have been reflected in high satisfaction ratings/feedback.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION 2024-2025:

- Monmouthshire Council continues to advance its vision of making homelessness rare, brief and unrepeatable aligned with its Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (2022-2027), with prevention remaining a core strategic priority.
- Support offered by homelessness prevention officers can include affordability checks, help with searching for properties and landlord mediation. In 2024-2025 the prevention officers recorded a 71% success rate.
- This year the Compass Project has transitioned to become part of the Housing Support Team; to implement early identification and prevention among young people aged 11-25 as part of its Youth Engagement and Prevention Strategy. The project is based within Monmouthshire's secondary schools and collaborates with key stakeholders to extend the above throughout local communities to identify especially those young people deemed most hardest to reach.
- During the financial period of 2024/25, out of 70 11–16-year-olds identified and supported, approximately 25% of these included safeguarding concerns being identified and referred. For those aged 16-25 of the 31 identified and supported, approximately 60% included safeguarding identification and referral.

PREVENT: (Counter Terrorism and Radicalisation):

- Monmouthshire continues to prioritise safeguarding and counter radicalisation efforts via PREVENT, with schools playing a key role in identifying individuals at potential risk with education and Police being the main referrers to panel. Referrals primarily are for young people aged 13 – 19 years, with no referrals for younger age groups during this year. There has been an increase in the emergence of neurodiverse traits in referrals which prompted the collaboration with Monmouthshire's Autism service to enhance understanding and engagement with those individuals.
- Panel continues to meet on a monthly basis. No cases reviewed at the 6 months post closure point have required a re-referral, suggesting successful early intervention and disruption from radicalisation pathways.

COMMUNITY SAFETY:

- There is a continued downward trend in Anti-Social Behaviour [ASB] in Monmouthshire with the highest number of recorded incidents in May 24 [130 incidents] reducing to 88 reported incidents in February 25. In October 2024, the Community Safety Team revitalised the ASB Strike Process—a multi-agency framework designed to address ASB, primarily among young people, but also

applicable to adults. The process aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of individual behaviours within identified cohorts.

- The Community Safety Team actively participates in various multi-agency forums focused on children and young people. Analysis indicates that many individuals involved in ASB also display similar behaviours in educational settings, youth service activities, and, in some cases, engage in criminal activity from an early age.
- In contrast, the adult ASB Strike Process has seen limited application, with partner agencies typically opting for legislative approaches to address problematic behaviour at an earlier stage.

ANALYSIS

Monmouthshire continues to be proactive in identifying emerging issues, risks, and challenges within communities. Preventative services demonstrate a clear multi-agency approach to developing protocols, processes, and practices to respond to issues that arise. This approach aims to reduce risks through early intervention and preventative measures, diverting children and families from statutory Children Services interventions and safely access universal services for support.

Complexity of individual needs is a primary pressure, and this is seen through the rising issues of Harmful Sexual Behaviour, ongoing issues of Domestic Abuse, and the new understanding of Transitional Safeguarding whereby vulnerable young people require ongoing support post 18 years to manage risk, even though not reaching the formal threshold for statutory Adult Services. The complexity of need and its accompanying behaviours has been seen in all service areas including YOS, Education, Housing and Homelessness and Early Help Services. We continue to provide effective preventative work through strong partnership working and a focus on individual relationships - this is a particular strength within Monmouthshire.

Monmouthshire demonstrates a strong multiagency approach to prevention at both operational and strategic levels. Partnership forums facilitate information sharing and risk management, addressing issues such as exploitation, homelessness, and safeguarding. The council continues to focus on prevention and partnership working, despite financial pressures, to support vulnerable individuals and communities effectively.

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 and within a Statutory framework. Multi-agency plans and interventions reduce risks and needs for children and vulnerable adults including those at risk of significant harm.

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:

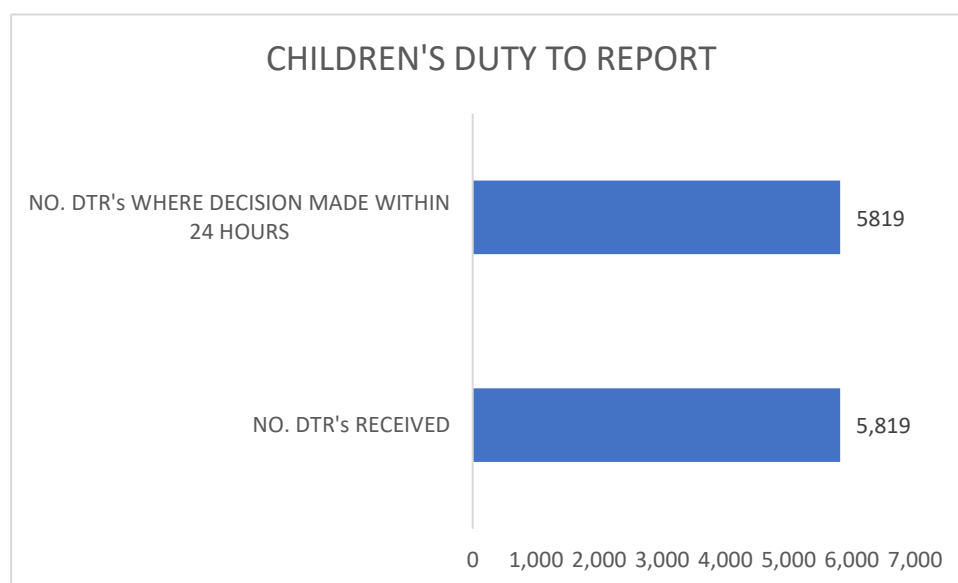
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK:

- The Safeguarding Hub continues to have a strong multiagency presence for Child and Adult Safeguarding meetings which is supported by digital platforms. Unfortunately, Police Officers have been withdrawn from the Gwent Hubs [including Monmouthshire] for re-training. This has had an impact on timescales for meetings. However, although it is more time consuming, communication and relationships remain positive between Police and the Local Authority ensuring that children and adults are safeguarded. The issue of having a Police presence within the hubs has been regularly raised within strategic forums and at the Gwent Safeguarding Board. Police Senior Officers have given assurances that there would be a physical presence returning to the hub in the new financial year, although this is yet to come to fruition.
- From April 24 the Monmouthshire Children's Risk Assessment Framework 'Keeping Children Safe' was updated and fully implemented and a mandatory whole service training programme was completed, with a rolling refresher programme for staff and an induction. In line with this work a review of all statutory processes within Children Services was completed to support children's transitions, consistency and efficiency. This work has reduced bureaucracy, leading to clearer processes and more timely decision making. The work was supported by workshops led by the Safeguarding Unit and will be expanded to include Adult Safeguarding during 2025-26.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

- Following the significant increase in Child Protection 'Duty to Reports' [DTR's] noted in the CIW inspection report and the Evaluation report 23-34 Monmouthshire's Children's Services Leadership Team (CSLT) undertook a comprehensive review of the Early Help and Assessment Team [EHAT], with an audit being undertaken of 150 cases (of cases with 5+DTR's). The audit highlighted strengths in statutory compliance, sibling work and decision making. However, the audit highlighted systemic challenges including inappropriate referrals from partner agencies, inconsistent thresholds and pathways, and high workflow pressures affecting staff wellbeing, engagement and recruitment.

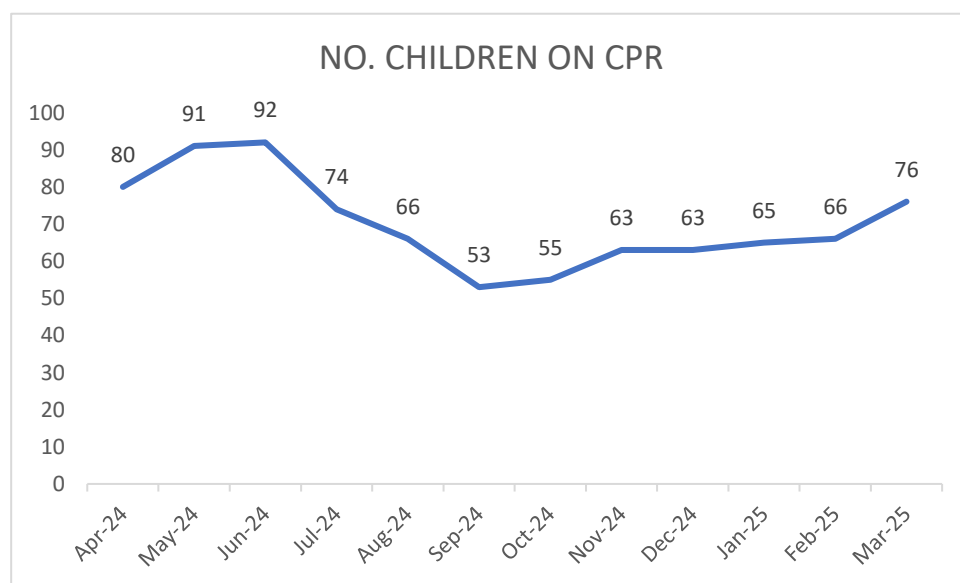
- As a result, there has been a review of the roles and responsibilities within EHAT to support the operational direction of the team. Work has been undertaken to standardise referral processes, strengthen training, embed quality assurance systems, increase resource capacity and enhance data analysis and monitoring of referral trends. We have engaged with partners to align thresholds and improve understanding. This has resulted in a reduction of 800 DTR's and 100 less Strategy Discussions being held. It has been recognised that there is an increase to the complexity of cases necessitating the need for Strategy Discussions, however this data indicates improved referral appropriateness and threshold decision making.

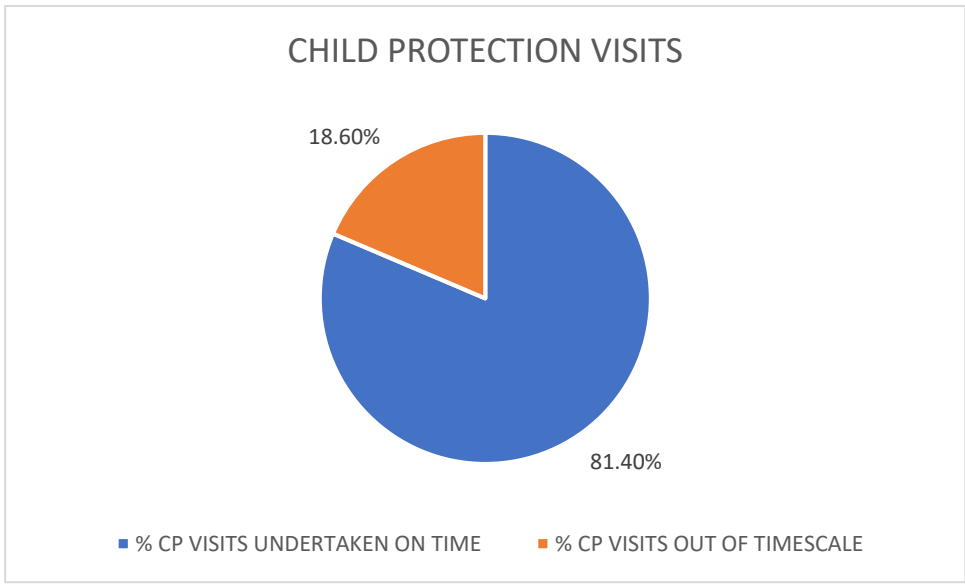
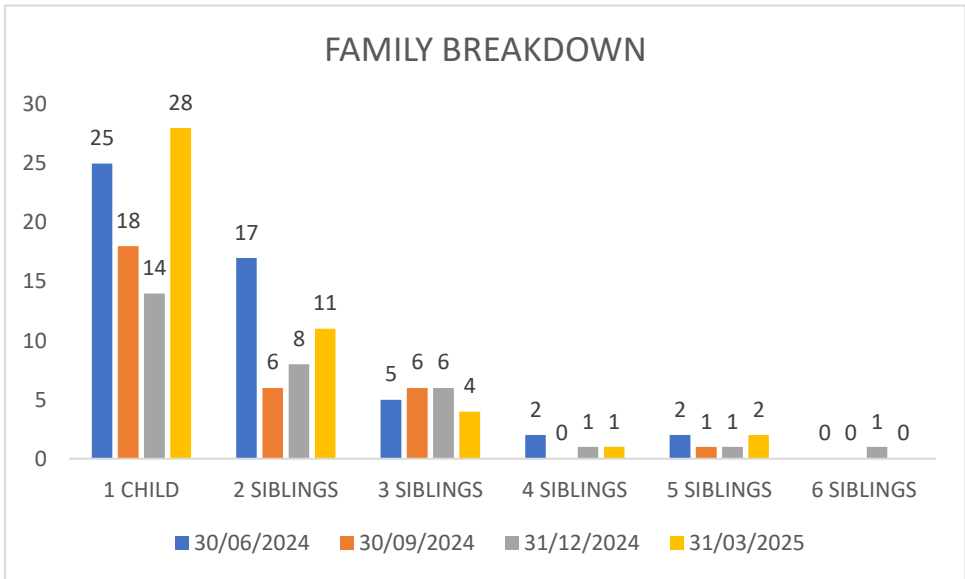
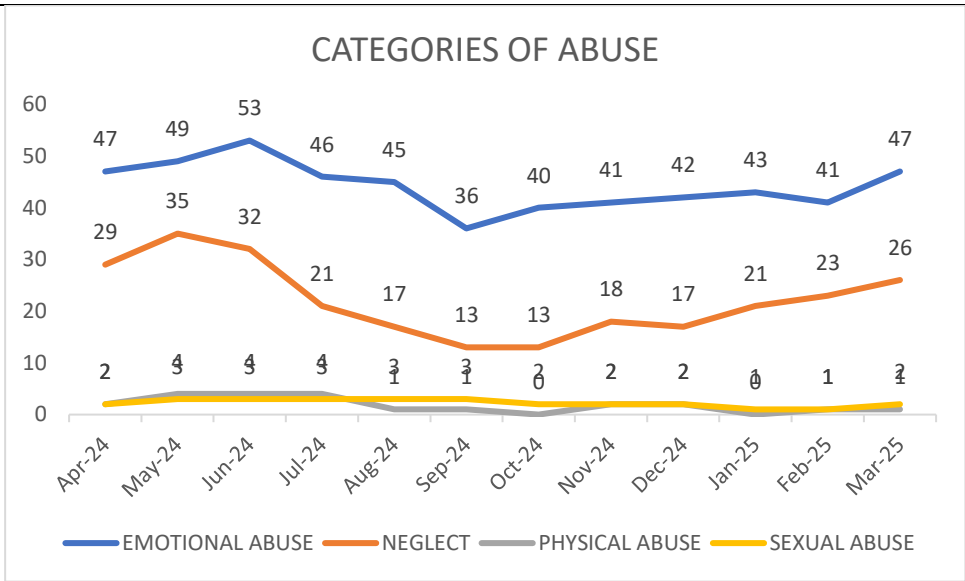


CHILD PROTECTION REGISTRATION:

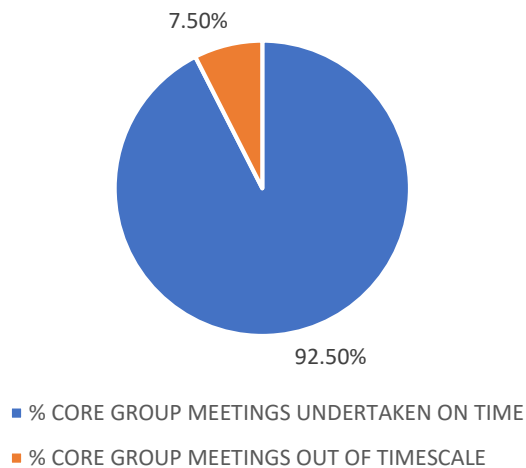
- Despite fluctuations in numbers, there has been a downward trend in the number of children whose names are on the Child Protection Register [CPR]. This relates to the expansion of Family Support services for children who need a statutory service who are able to provide an intensive package of support tailored to the individual / family needs. This is further evidenced by the cases being de-registered from the CPR due to the successful completion of the Child Protection Plan and / or the risks being effectively managed.
- Emotional abuse remains the highest category, linked to incidents of domestic abuse. Neglect is the second highest category for registration. This pattern is replicated regionally and nationally.
- Sexual abuse remains under reported, again which is reflected in national data. Children's Services Leadership Team [CSLT] undertook a Whole Service workshop to raise awareness of familial sexual abuse and there is a Child Sexual Abuse subgroup with the GSB producing a regional Sexual Abuse Protocol to help raise awareness and improve practice.

- Police availability for Initial Child Protection Conferences, related to resource and staffing issues within Police has been challenging. There have been occasions where Police have been unable to accommodate an Initial Child Protection Conference within the statutory timeframes. The Police have introduced a new booking system to try and mitigate this, and there has been some improvement noted. This issue has been escalated to Senior Management within Gwent Police, and they are in the process of recruiting more staff.
- Children's participation in their Conference is considered on a case-by-case basis. This year saw a reduction in take up of the NYAS advocacy service by children. Quarterly monitoring meetings demonstrate this is due to lack of parental consent for the service, and staffing availability to meet the need within the initial conference timescale. To mitigate this each childcare team consider how best to engage children via a trusted adult (SW., Teacher, relative etc) to increase a child's participation.
- There has been the introduction of monthly meetings between the Team Managers and the Safeguarding Unit to review the team's data to ensure they are compliant with statutory timeframes, but also to explore the quality or practice and recordings. There has noted improvements particularly in assessment quality and compliance.



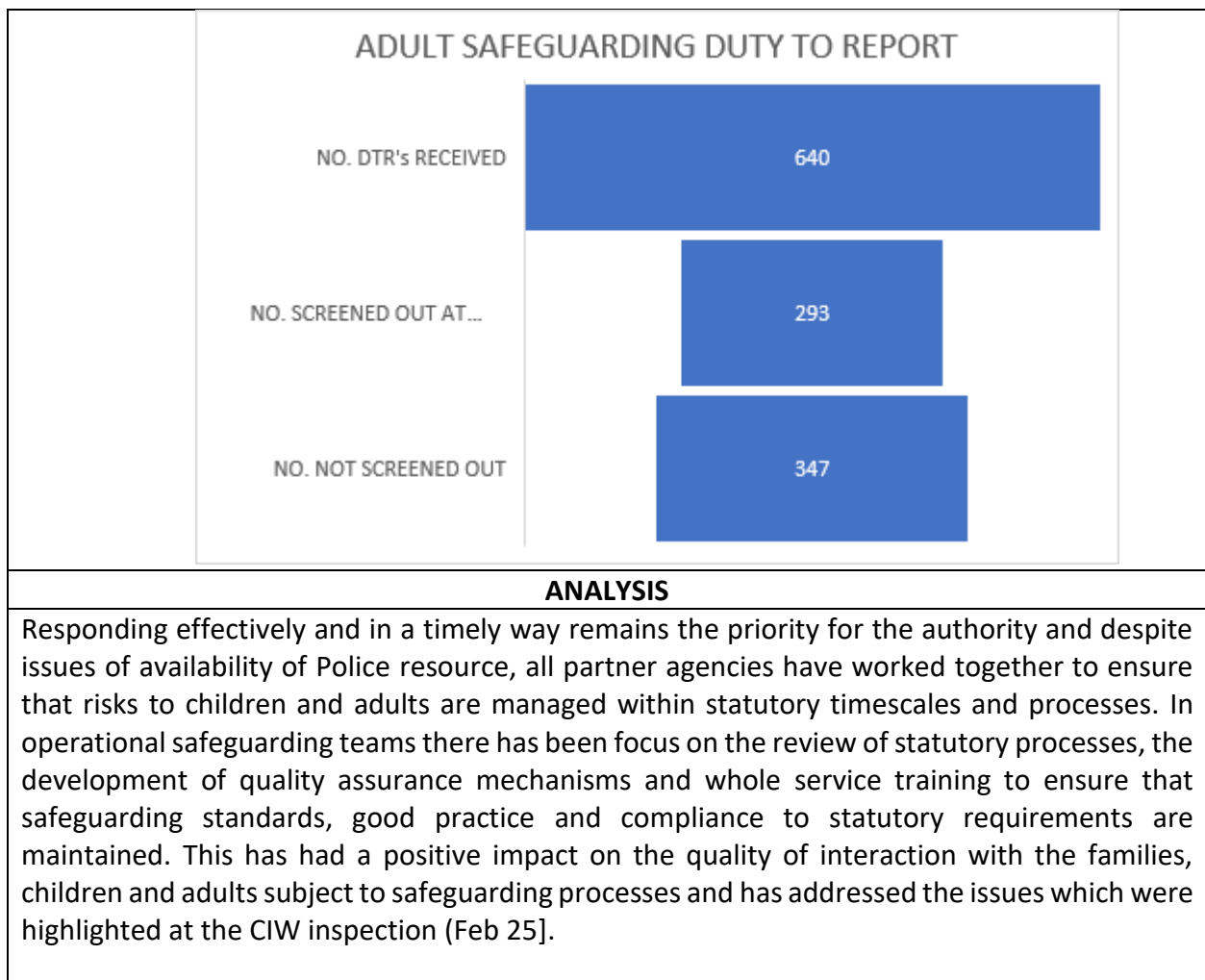


CORE GROUP MEETINGS



ADULT SAFEGUARDING:

- Adult Safeguarding have received 640 Duty to Reports in relation to 490 adults. Of these 640 reports 293 were screened out.
- Of those cases being allocated for further enquiries, almost 87% were completed within the 7 working day statutory timeframe, which is a 1% increase from last year. The 13% of cases which did not meet Statutory timescales were managed by Health Safeguarding, where system delay and complexity were the main causes of delay. In cases where delay occurs, these are reviewed by Adult Safeguarding to ensure they do not drift.
- Regarding categories of abuse, neglect remains the highest reports of concern [337 referrals] followed by physical abuse [225 referrals]
- The main sources of referral are from provider services, followed by Health. Work is ongoing with partner agencies to explore the appropriateness and quality of referrals.



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

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.

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:

COMMISSIONING:

- Quality assurance processes remain in place for adult care provider services in the county receiving an annual monitoring visit, and in the case of larger providers 1-2 additional visits a year to maintain relationships.
- For Childrens Services formal monitoring has been done mainly at a desktop level due to services being individual and out of county, however, when necessary, in person visits are carried out. All 'in county placements' are completed face to face.
- One Older Adult Care Home that was in the Provider Performance process, escalated to the Escalating Concerns process due to concerns around leadership and management, staffing and quality of care. With support from ABUHB and Monmouthshire County Council the provider service (care home] worked hard to improve, and the Escalating Concerns process was ended in February 2025 following completion of the improvement action plan.
- There has been one Domiciliary Care service supported and monitored via the Provider Performance process; the provider made significant progress, and the process was concluded with normal monitoring returning.
- There were 2 children's commissioned placements where the providers were subject to an Improvement Plan with one concluding in September 24, and the second home commencing in March 25. The children were safeguarded through that process.
- In terms of other children's provision, there were no other services in formal processes during this period.

MONMOUTHSHIRE RESIDENTIAL SERVICE:

In November 24 a 4/5-bedroom 16+ Supported Living home was opened in Caldicot. The service provider was commissioned via the appropriate tendering process. The contract continues to be monitored by all parties on a quarterly basis. The service has settled well without significant issues.

LICENSING:

Taxi Licensing requires stringent testing before a licence is granted, and requires DBS checks every 6 months for taxi drivers. Conditions of an operator's licence require them to conduct DBS checks on all staff they employ as call handlers. Licensing works closely with Passenger Transport Unit and takes part in school transport checks along with attending and putting measures in place in strategy meetings as and when required. Licensing also works closely with Immigration and the Police anti-slavery teams and conduct operations within the hospitality sector. Three venues are currently under investigation.

In 2024/25 The Gambling Policy review took place which was adopted at Full Council in January 2025. The policy must be reviewed every 3 years. The policy deals with the following objectives:

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime,
- Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, and
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

The policy looked at the harmful effects that gambling has and proposed a *no casino* resolution in Monmouthshire which was upheld. However, venues and the operation of gambling can also provide a vibrancy to towns and raise money for good causes if conducted safely and the policy aims to strike this balance.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT [PTU]:

- Following the completion of an internal audit, it was established that drivers the PTU had commissioned were not compliant with their Safeguarding Training. Appropriate action has been taken to resolve this, and with support from the Safeguarding Unit to deliver training, drivers have been able to undertake the appropriate level of safeguarding training. As of 16th April, compliance was 100%.
- Following discussions between the Safeguarding Unit, PTU and Education, it was identified that not all the one-page profiles completed for children accessing transport were shared with PTU following them being updated and/or reviewed. This was highlighted due to an increase in the number of drivers or passenger assistants being discussed within the PCM arena, as they were not responding to the child as agreed. A piece of work has been undertaken by PTU, Safeguarding Unit and Education to rectify this and ensure all one-page profiles are up to date and shared appropriately. This has resulted in the reduction of concerns being identified and subsequent PCM's being held with only 2 cases during quarters 3 and 4.

ANALYSIS

There are clear processes in place to ensure a robust monitoring for all social care commissioned services for children and adults. There is good evidence that safeguarding is 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.

SAFEGUARDING CURRENT ACTIVITY PLAN [2024 – 2025]:

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
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	Safeguarding Unit	Sept 2024	

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
item for WASG to ensure whole council scrutiny.			
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	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2025	

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
those who are employers and those who are at greater risk of being discussed in the arena, eg 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	

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
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	
Appoint to Safeguarding Service Manager position	Head of Children's Services	July 2024	
Recruit a 4th Service Manager to take forward the development of	Head of Children's Services	July 2024	

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
Monmouthshire Children and young people placements.			
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	