

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

16 JULY 2020

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING WALES AUDIT OFFICE FOLLOW UP REVIEW OF CORPORATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN

#### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the outcome of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) 2019 review and the proposals for improvement made and to update the Committee on the actions taken in response to the proposals for improvement.

#### 2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-
1. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
  2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Wales Audit Office have undertaken the review to seek assurance that the Council has effective corporate arrangements in place to support safeguarding of children and to implement the recommendations and proposals for improvement contained in the national and local reports of the Auditor General published in 2014 and 2015.
- 3.2 The review was undertaken between July and September 2019, through the completion of a self-assessment attached as **Appendix A**, document reviews and interviews.

#### 4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The review report issued in October 2019 found that 'overall the Council has met, or partially met, the recommendations and proposals for improvement, and have identified further proposals for improvement to strengthen aspects of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements'.

4.2 The table below details the nine proposals for improvement:

Proposals for improvement
<p>P1 The Council should strengthen awareness of the roles of the lead officer and lead member for safeguarding by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• including information about the roles of the lead member and lead officer for safeguarding on the Council's safeguarding intranet pages; and</li> <li>• ensuring safeguarding is included in the lead member's portfolio responsibilities on the Council website</li> </ul>
<p>P2 The Council should strengthen the Corporate Safeguarding Policy in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarify the role and responsibilities of the lead member for safeguarding;</li> <li>• set out the role of scrutiny in the Council's safeguarding arrangements;</li> <li>• clarify the role of the operational corporate safeguarding board; and</li> <li>• remove obsolete reference to safeguarding champions.</li> </ul>
<p>P3 The Council should strengthen its Recruitment and Selection Managers' Guidelines in relation to safeguarding and safe recruitment. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the job descriptions section could refer to safeguarding for relevant posts;</li> <li>• specify that job adverts for posts that require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will contain an explicit statement on safeguarding; and</li> <li>• the guidelines should cross refer to the DBS Policy and the Corporate Safeguarding Policy</li> </ul>
<p>P4 The Council should update its DBS policy to ensure it makes reference to current legislation</p>
<p>P5 The Council should ensure the consistent use of safeguarding provisions in tenders and contracts across all Directorates and ensure appropriate monitoring of such contractual provisions.</p>
<p>P6 The Council should improve its approach to safeguarding training in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarify when mandatory safeguarding training needs to be refreshed;</li> <li>• clarify how often safeguarding training should be offered to members; and</li> <li>• accelerate the rate of compliance with the completion of its mandatory safeguarding training</li> </ul>
<p>P7 The Council should develop a central system for recording and monitoring volunteer information, including any training records and DBS checks for volunteers, and consider producing central guidance for the recruitment of volunteers.</p>
<p>P8 The Council should consider producing further performance measures (for example in respect of DBS check compliance and mandatory safeguarding training) to enhance the performance that goes to scrutiny and aid transparency.</p>
<p>P9 The Council should consider the merits of the operational corporate safeguarding group having oversight of corporate safeguarding risks from across the Council.</p>

4.3 The full report is attached as **Appendix B**.

4.4 Officers have considered the comments and observations outlined in the report and an action plan (**Appendix C**) has been developed against the nine proposals for improvement. Progress against the agreed actions is detailed in the table below:

Proposal no	Actions	Response	Responsible officer	Status
P1	Information about the roles of the lead member and lead officer for safeguarding to be included on the Corporate Safeguarding Intranet pages.	Corporate Safeguarding pages have been updated as per the recommendation	Workforce Development Officer – Social Care	Completed
	Safeguarding to be included in the lead Member's portfolio responsibilities on the Council's website.	Corporate website has been updated as per the recommendation	Democratic Services Manager	Completed
P2	The role and responsibilities of the lead member for safeguarding are set out in the lead member's role description.	The lead members role description reflects the roles and responsibilities as per the recommendation	Democratic Services Manager	Completed
	The Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 considers matters which are Social Services and Wellbeing themed.	Safeguarding was considered by the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 in July 2019 and will be included as a future item on the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.		
	The terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees can be amended at the Annual Meeting of Council to set out the role of scrutiny in the Council's safeguarding arrangements.			
P3	The Corporate Safeguarding Policy to be refreshed to reflect the changes to safeguarding procedures in Wales being introduced from April 2020.	The Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been updated as per the recommendation.	Workforce Development Manager - Social Care	Completed
		The Policy aligns to new All Wales Safeguarding Procedures.		
		There will be a further update to include reference to the role of the operational safeguarding board. This action is linked to P9.		Ammendment will be required to include reference to the role of the operational safeguarding group once partnership agreement as to its structure and remit has been reached.
P3	Recruitment and Selection Managers' Guidelines will be updated to reinforce the importance of safeguarding in recruitment as well as employees' roles in safeguarding. The changes will include	All recruitment documentation has been updated as per the recommendations	Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development	Completed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the job descriptions section could include reference to safeguarding</li> <li>• adverts for posts that require a DBS check will contain an explicit statement on safeguarding; and</li> <li>• the guidelines will make reference to the DBS Policy and the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.</li> </ul>			
P4	The protocol will be updated to accurately reflect current legislation.	A further review of this policy is underway and the updated version will be reported to Council for approval in due course.	Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development	Completed
P5	Whilst preparing tenders, procurement will consider use of safeguarding provisions in tenders and contracts – we will look to liaise with our contract lawyers for contract conditions.	Further communication would need to take place with client departments with regards to specific contracts as procurement does not manage the day to day operational arrangements of contracts, this only happens with corporate contracts.	Corporate Procurement Manager	This action is being progressed
P6	<p>The content of the safeguarding e-learning is to be refreshed to reflect the changes to safeguarding procedures in Wales being introduced from April 2020.</p> <p>And then be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if required.</p> <p>Safeguarding training was previously delivered to Members in September 2017</p> <p>See also P8 re training compliance</p>	<p>The safeguarding e-learning module has been updated to reflect the changes to safeguarding procedures and practice. The module is hosted on Corporate learning and development website.</p> <p>Members can access the e-learning safeguarding module.</p> <p>Compliance with completion of mandatory safeguarding training is monitored and quarterly reporting is in place.</p>	Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development	Completed
P7	<p>An audit of volunteering activity will be undertaken and corporate guidance developed on the use volunteers.</p> <p>This will include the consideration of either central or Directorate systems for recording and monitoring.</p>	<p>The audit has been completed, however, the outcomes and have not yet been reported to CMB, due to other pressing demands.</p> <p>Further work will be progressed to consider the options for recording and monitoring volunteer records. This will take</p>	Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development	In progress

		account of safeguarding requirements and best practice.		
P8	Monitoring arrangements are currently in place for DBS compliance and Safeguarding training. Reporting arrangements will be established to enable monitoring of this performance at a corporate level.	Quarterly reports are in place and these will be scheduled for CMB meetings	Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development	Completed
P9	<p>The Corporate Safeguarding Group has been superseded by the Bridgend Locality Operational Safeguarding Group which has multi-agency representation.</p> <p>A workshop to review the functionality of the group and to make recommendations for future arrangements was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020.</p> <p>A multi-agency task and finish group will take forward the recommendations.</p>	<p>There was general agreement from partner agencies present at the workshop that there is benefit in retaining a group.</p> <p>The task and finish group is to be convened to explore options and make recommendation for the future structure and remit of the group</p>	Corporate Director of Social Services & Wellbeing	<p>In progress</p> <p>Task and Finish Group delayed due to Covid-19 pressures.</p>

## 5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

## 6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 The Safeguarding Policy has been updated to reflect national changes to safeguarding procedures. The All Wales Safeguarding Procedures aim to ensure practice is in accordance with the legislative requirements and expectations of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Updates have also been made to corporate policy and practice which pertain to safeguarding children, young people and adults who are or may be at risk of abuse or neglect. There would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the nine protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010.

## 7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, in turn, supports the promotion of two of the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 within the County Borough of Bridgend. By promoting an environment, that maximises people's physical and mental well-being and by supporting children, young people, adults and their carers and families to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances, the wellbeing goals of a healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.

7.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- Long Term – the Council supports people at times of difficulty as well as in the long term. It is important that a safeguarding culture is embedded across the Council so that everyone understands their role in preventing and protecting people from abuse and neglect and enabling people to lead fulfilled lives and achieve well-being. Having effective corporate arrangements in place for safeguarding will support this outcome.
- Prevention – safeguarding is everyone’s business whether they work for or on behalf of the Council, in a paid or voluntary capacity. Raising awareness and having in place systems which aim to prevent harm from occurring in the first place evidences that the Council considers safeguarding as core business and recognises the role that early intervention and prevention can play in promoting wellbeing.
- Integration – ensuring the Council has effective corporate arrangements in place for safeguarding requires the collaboration of all directorates and services across the Council, partner agencies and within the community. The audit report provides evidence of clear strategic direction.
- Collaboration –the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to work with partners, to ensure care, support and protection of all and more specifically, it’s most vulnerable persons. The Council takes up opportunities to identify and to share approaches and practice that support effective safeguarding arrangements with a view to improving well-being outcomes.
- Involvement – there are mechanisms in place to ensure that stakeholder engagement contributes to effective safeguarding. The provision of accessible information and advice helps to ensure that the voice of children, young people and adults is heard and responded to.

## **8. Financial implications**

8.1 There are no direct financial implications linked to this report.

## **9. Recommendation(s)**

9.1 It is recommended that that the Audit Committee receive the WAO report and note the actions and progress made against the proposals for improvement.

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**Background documents:** None