

# Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children

## **Bridgend County Borough Council**

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# Status of report

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The person who delivered the work was Melanie Watson of KPMG.

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# Summary report

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## Background

1. The safeguarding of children is everyone's responsibility. Local authorities have a statutory duty to have in place safeguarding arrangements which include strategic planning, support and guidance for all providers of relevant services in their area, and the direct provision of some services themselves. In particular, local authorities have a duty to work in partnership with others to secure the safeguarding and wellbeing of children in their area, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).
2. Employees and volunteers who work with children have specific safeguarding duties and responsibilities. Local authorities and schools must ensure through their Human Resources (HR) and personnel arrangements that adequate checks are in place to ensure that employees and volunteers are of good character and that their working practices are managed and monitored. Local authorities must also ensure that there are processes in place to investigate and record safeguarding allegations made against staff, teachers and support staff, and volunteers.
3. Members, Chief Executives and senior managers need to ensure that they have proper oversight of the safeguarding arrangements that are in place across the authority. They should actively seek and gain assurance that arrangements are operating effectively, as without this they will be unable to demonstrate that they have discharged their statutory obligation in respect of safeguarding.
4. During the period March to May 2014, the Wales Audit Office completed a review of the assurance and accountability arrangements of Bridgend County Borough Council (the Council) for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are being adhered to. The study examined what the Council itself has done to seek assurance that its arrangements to support safeguarding are effective by reviewing how the Council is discharging its safeguarding responsibilities at all levels: Cabinet, senior management team, Scrutiny and individual officers.
5. The study focussed on answering the following question: **Do the Council's governance and management arrangements provide assurance that children are safeguarded?** The main questions that the review sought to answer were:
  - Are there clear governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children?
  - Is the Council monitoring and evaluating appropriate information, which provides assurance that it is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children?
  - Are assurance systems operating effectively?

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## Review findings and conclusions

6. We examined policies relevant to safeguarding; reports to Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny; and set out below our conclusions based on the extent to which the Council has put in place, and is operating, effective management and assurance processes and controls for safeguarding. As part of this study, we made available an online survey for elected members, senior managers, education, schools and leisure staff to test the Council's arrangements for safeguarding. Surveying is valuable because it provides an insight into the Council from the perspective of the people who make decisions and do the work. It also allows us to determine the relative strengths or weaknesses of local safeguarding arrangements and identify where councils can make improvements. The detailed survey findings for the Council are set out in [Appendix 1](#), although we include conclusions where relevant in each of the following sections.

### The governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children are adequate but some improvements could be made

7. The Council has agreed a protocol that clearly sets out the roles of officers and elected Members in relation to social services. This specifies that the person with ultimate responsibility for safeguarding is the Statutory Director of Social Services (Director of Well-being). The Council has a Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee with wide membership across all Council directorates. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews issues related to children's services including safeguarding.
8. The Council uses the All Wales Policies and Procedures to guide its work on safeguarding of children. The Council also has a suite of related policies and procedures in place. These include policies for grievance, disciplinary, adult education safeguarding, and taxi licensing. The Council has also informed us that they have policies in place to cover such issues as the health and safety of children on school trips and children's ICT usage. A Corporate Safeguarding Policy is currently being developed and the aim is to emphasise that safeguarding is 'everyone's business'.
9. The designated officer responsible for child protection is the Group Manager for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance who is based in children's social care and is line managed by the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support. This role covers the whole Council. Interviewees consistently commented that safeguarding 'was everyone's business'. Survey results indicate that in comparison with other councils in Wales, fewer staff in Bridgend knew who the designated officer was for child protection and fewer knew who the lead councillor was for child protection.

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10. The Council's corporate risk register clearly identifies safeguarding risks as part of wider risks to vulnerable people, identifies activities to reduce those risks and assigns responsibility to risk owners for each risk. Safeguarding risks are evident and explicit in social care business plans but less evident or explicit in non-social care business plans.

### The Council's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its safeguarding responsibilities are adequate but some improvements could be made

11. A set of 25 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been adopted to judge improvement in child protection and safeguarding. However, these mainly relate to Looked After Children (LAC) and are mostly statutory KPIs the Council is required to report its performance against. Monitoring takes place against previous years to identify declining or improving performance. Internal local PIs such as compliance with staff supervision are also monitored. An annual safeguarding report sets out wider information related to safeguarding activity, timeliness, and capacity. Data from schools is analysed to identify any need for safeguarding training or advice.
12. The Council has various systems in place to monitor, review and challenge performance. Whilst a lot of data is reviewed and monitored, officers recognise that the usefulness of this data varies. As a result the Council's Social Care Strategic Improvement Board is currently reviewing the performance information it uses to evaluate how well it is performing with the aim of identifying more meaningful measures to judge success.
13. Our survey found that fewer respondents in Bridgend believe that the Council deals effectively with specific incidents concerning safeguarding and protecting children and young people than other councils. Only 66 per cent of respondents to our survey strongly agreed or agreed with this statement compared with our survey average of 82 per cent. Likewise, the proportion that strongly agreed or agreed that the Council is good at safeguarding and protecting the children and young people that use its services and schools was much lower than the survey average, 64 per cent compared with the survey average of 85 per cent. A smaller proportion than the survey average also strongly agreed or agreed that the Council informs all parents how their children are safeguarded and protected when using Council services and schools, 39 per cent compared with the all-Wales survey average of 55 per cent.
14. Scrutiny arrangements for safeguarding are good and the Chair of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is very aware of the importance of safeguarding. There is evidence of this committee influencing policies and strategies agreed by the Portfolio Lead for Children. The senior leadership team has a good awareness of safeguarding and the issue is a standing item on each joint Corporate Management Board and Cabinet monthly meeting.

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15. The Council has sound systems in place, administered by the HR team, to ensure that all posts requiring Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are identified; that such post holders receive the checks when starting employment with the Council; and that these are refreshed every three years. Service specifications for relevant outsourced services identify the need for staff DBS checks and safeguarding training.
  16. Our survey found that 94 per cent of respondents in Bridgend are clear how their job contributes to safeguarding and protecting children and young people, close to the all-Wales survey average of 95 per cent. However, only 64 per cent stated that their responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children and young people were explained to them when they started in their role in the Council/school, compared with the Wales survey average of 75 per cent.
  17. Systems are in place to ensure that social care, school, and youth service staff as well as elected Members, foster carers and governors receive training in safeguarding. Child safety is covered in the social care induction programme along with mandatory staff supervision that is monitored via established KPIs. Training is informed by findings from serious case reviews to ensure it is relevant and up to date. Staff have access to electronic guidance and policies. However, safeguarding does not feature in the corporate induction programme and the Council is below the survey average for the number of people who have received training on safeguarding in the last six months – 14 per cent compared with 32 per cent across Wales – and it has more people who say they have never received safeguarding training, 13 per cent of respondents compared with our survey average of 10 per cent.

### The Council's approach to identifying and acting on improvements in its safeguarding arrangements is adequate but some improvements could be made

18. Examples exist of internal audit activity related to safeguarding as part of an annual Council-wide programme rather than specific to Children's Services. Children's Services undertake a quality assurance programme of their own case-file audits. Safeguarding is high profile amongst Members.
19. There is some evidence that the Council is learning from its evaluations and making improvements accordingly. For example, results of serious-case reviews inform the content of training, and social-care teams were restructured as a result of feedback from service users about what worked well and what did not.
20. The Council takes account of changes in legislation or policy related to safeguarding and reports the implications to the relevant committees or Cabinet. The Council is taking appropriate action to improve its compliance with data-protection legislation.

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## Overall whistleblowing arrangements are generally sound, but some weaknesses in training need to be addressed

21. The Council adopted a new and updated Whistleblowing Policy in April 2014, following a review of the policy and whistleblowing arrangements by Internal Audit in 2013. The policy is clearly written, succinct and well-structured. It uses reassuring language to explain the importance of raising whistleblowing concerns. The Policy exists as a standalone document and is easily accessible on the Council's intranet. The Council is aware that a number of staff do not have computer access and has prepared an article for its staff newsletter about the policy to raise awareness. Clear guidelines for managers on application of the policy have also been published. The current whistleblowing policy has been subject to member challenge and scrutiny as part of the internal-audit review.
22. Caseload related to whistleblowing is very low. The Council has not done anything to check the level of awareness of the whistleblowing policy amongst its staff. The Council's HR advisors have completed disciplinary and grievance training which covers whistleblowing and managers are invited to contact the Monitoring Officers if they require training but opportunities exist to strengthen and expand training and staff awareness.

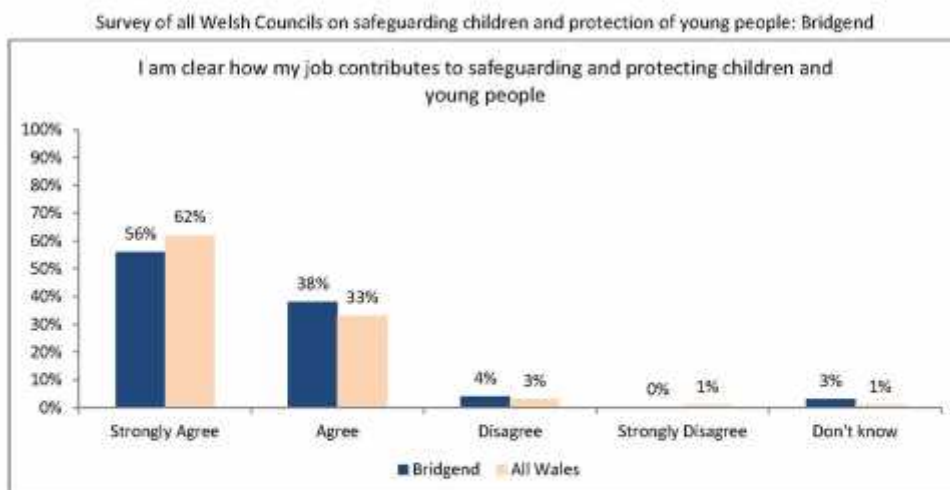
## Proposals for improvement

P1	Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.
P2	Complete the Social Care Strategic Improvement Board review of performance information and produce measures that provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.
P3	Ensure that the corporate induction programme for all new staff includes training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.
P4	Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding.

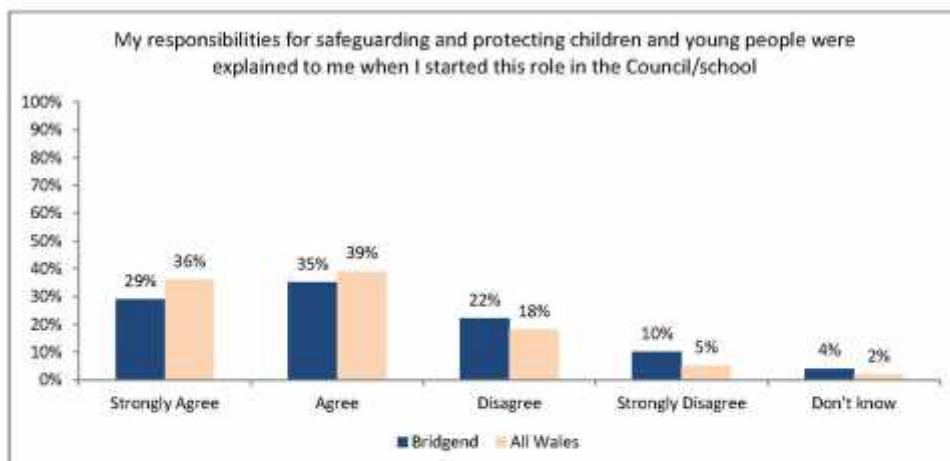


# Appendix 1

## Summary of survey findings



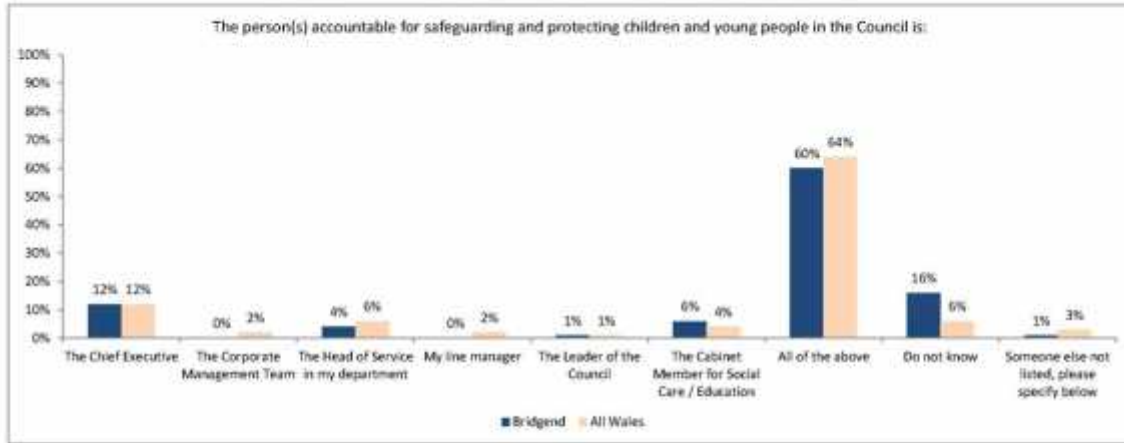
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Bridgend	79	-	-	44	30	3	-	2
Expressed opinion *				56%	38%	4%		3%
All Wales	1996	-	6	1235	664	53	12	26
Expressed opinion *				62%	33%	3%	1%	1%



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Bridgend	79	-	1	23	27	17	8	3
Expressed opinion *				29%	35%	22%	10%	4%
All Wales	1996	-	10	716	773	358	104	35
Expressed opinion *				36%	39%	18%	5%	2%

\* To make the report easier to read, percentages are shown to nearest whole percentage point. It is therefore possible for the individual figures not to total exactly to 100%.

Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Bridgend

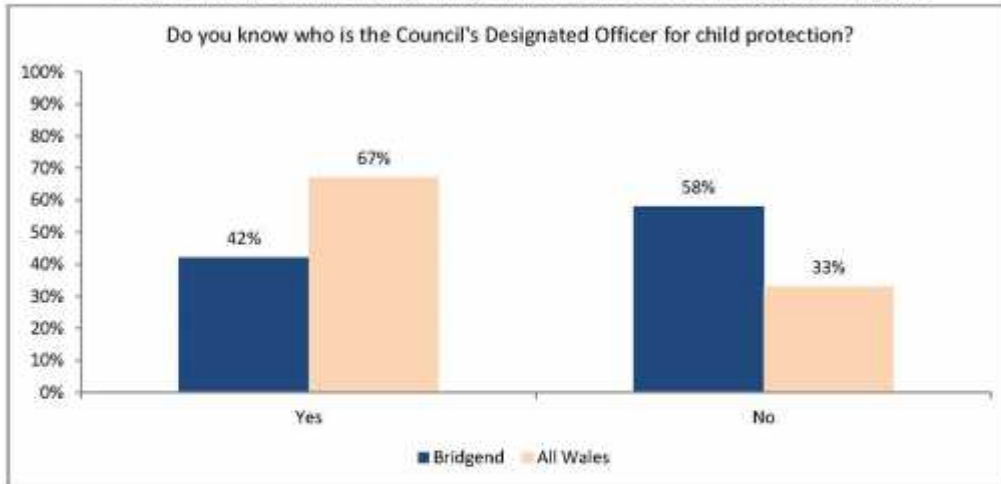


Total    Not asked    No reply    The Chief Executive    The Corporate Management Team    The Head of Service in my department    My line manager    The Leader of the Council    The Cabinet Member for Social Care / Education    All of the above    Do not know    Someone else not listed, please specify below

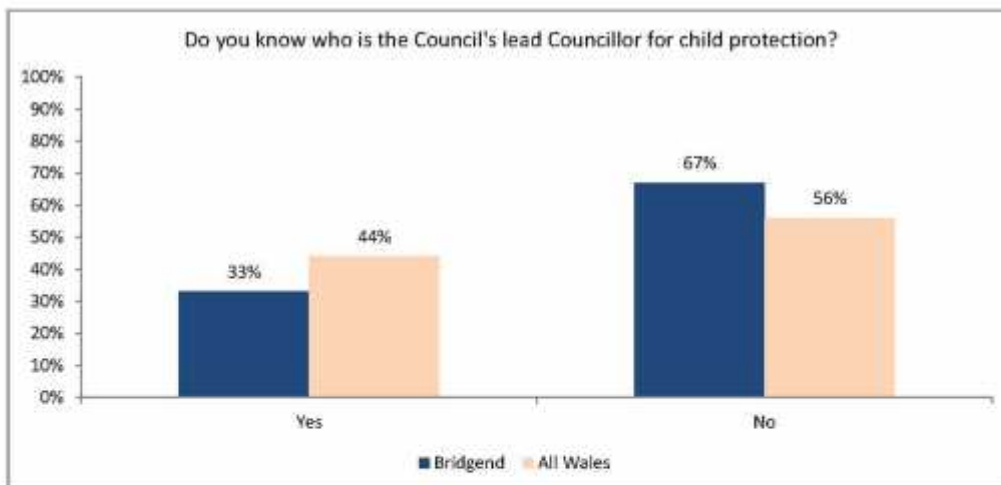
Bridgend	79	-	2	9	-	3	-	1	5	46	12	1
Expressed opinion *				12%		4%		1%	6%	60%	16%	1%
All Wales	1996	-	68	223	34	124	67	19	69	1231	115	66
Expressed opinion *				12%	2%	6%	2%	1%	4%	64%	6%	3%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Bridgend



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Bridgend	79	-	1	33	45
Expressed opinion *				42%	58%
All Wales	1996	-	13	1337	646
Expressed opinion *				67%	33%



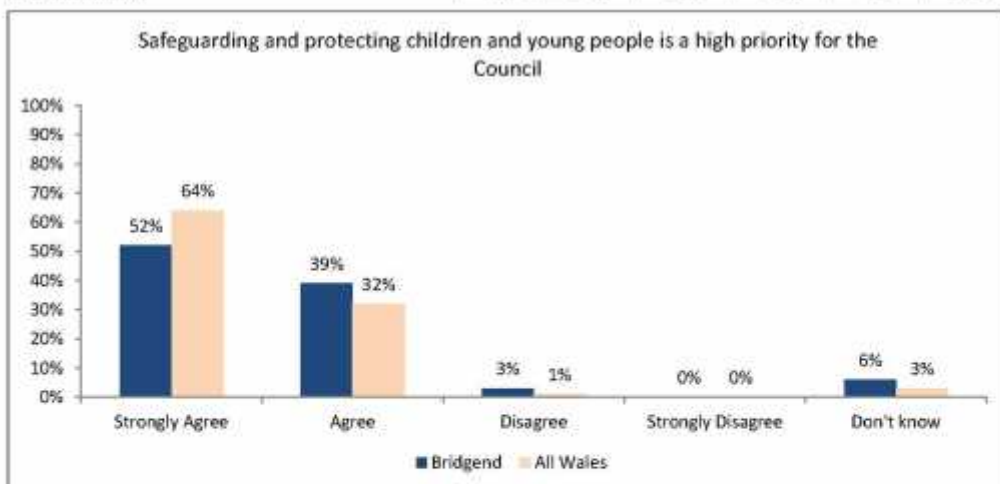
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Bridgend	79	-	-	26	53
Expressed opinion *				33%	67%
All Wales	1996	-	13	881	1102
Expressed opinion *				44%	56%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Bridgend



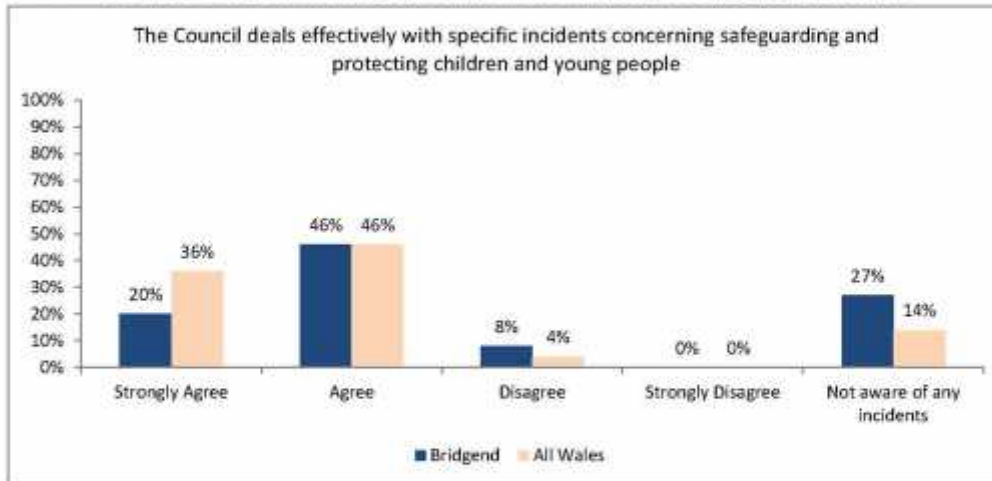
	Total	Not asked	No reply	0-6 months ago	7-12 months ago	1-2 years ago	More than 2 years ago	I cannot remember	I have never received training
Bridgend Expressed opinion *	79	-	-	11	18	14	17	9	10
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	4	644	462	374	199	121	192



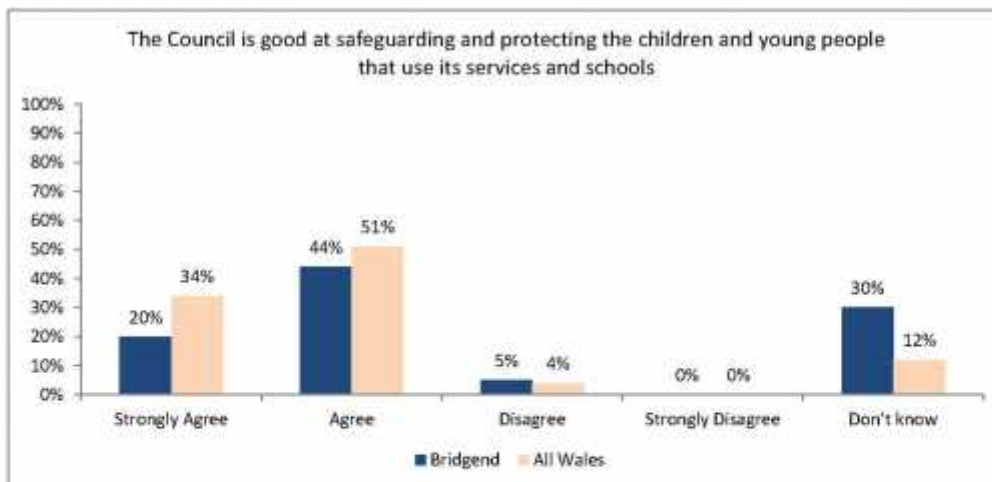
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Bridgend Expressed opinion *	79	-	-	41	31	2	-	5
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	10	1266	628	27	4	61

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Bridgend



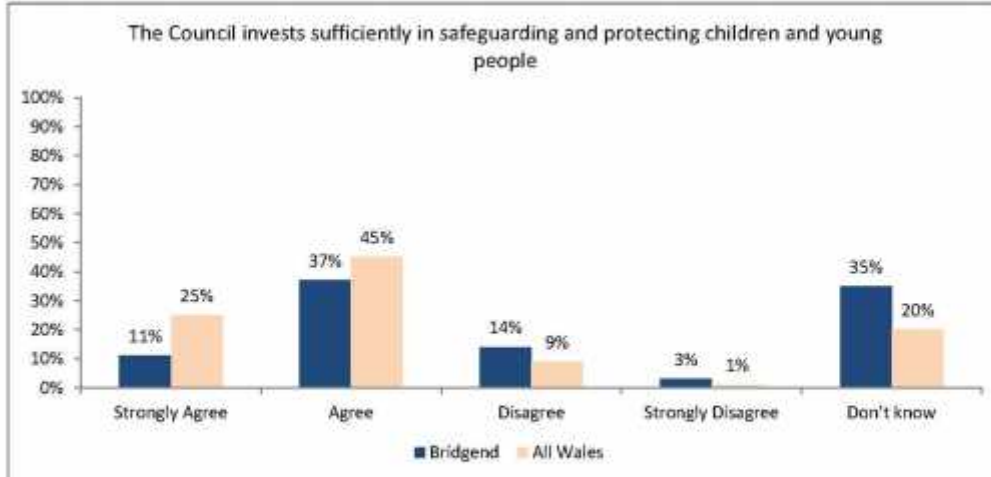
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not aware of any incidents
Bridgend Expressed opinion *	79	-	-	16 20%	35 46%	6 8%	-	21 27%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	11	722 36%	911 46%	76 4%	5 0%	271 14%



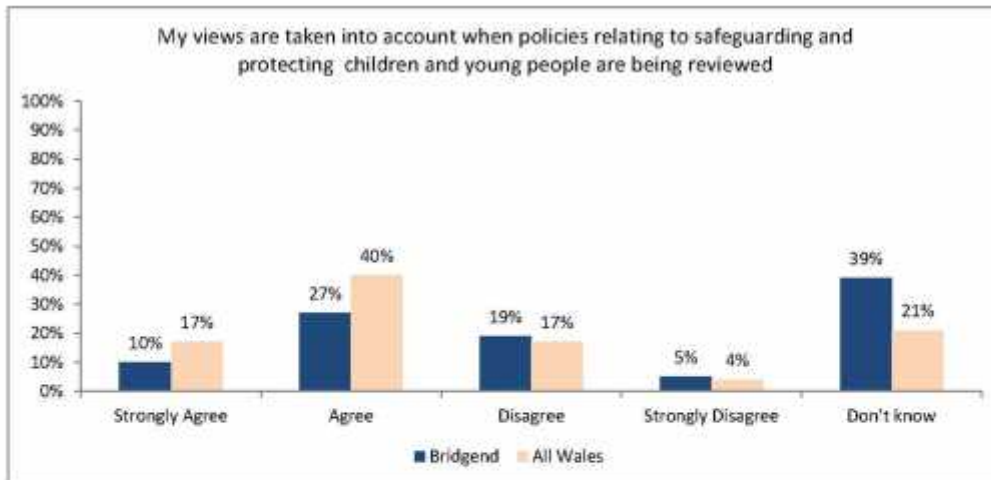
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Bridgend Expressed opinion *	79	-	-	16 20%	35 44%	4 5%	-	24 30%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	20	665 34%	1000 51%	74 4%	3 0%	234 12%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Bridgend



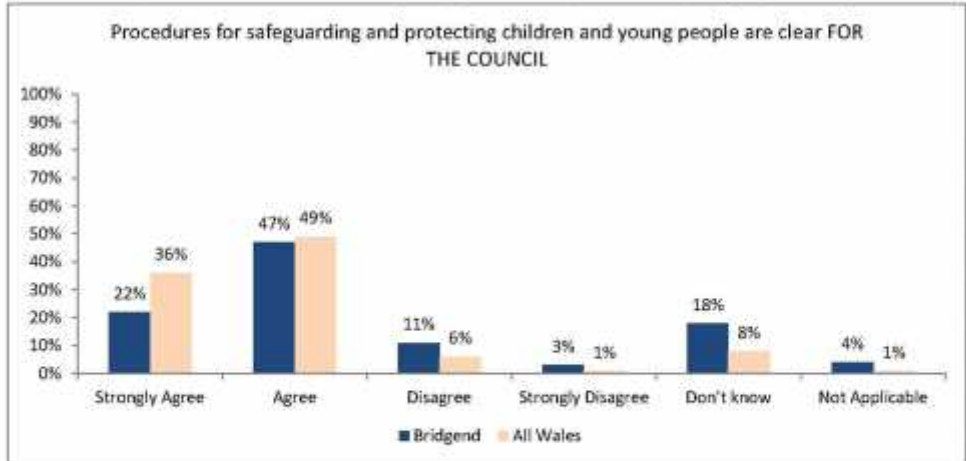
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Bridgend Expressed opinion *	79	-	-	9	29	11	2	28
				11%	37%	14%	3%	35%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	17	491	895	182	19	392
				25%	45%	9%	1%	20%



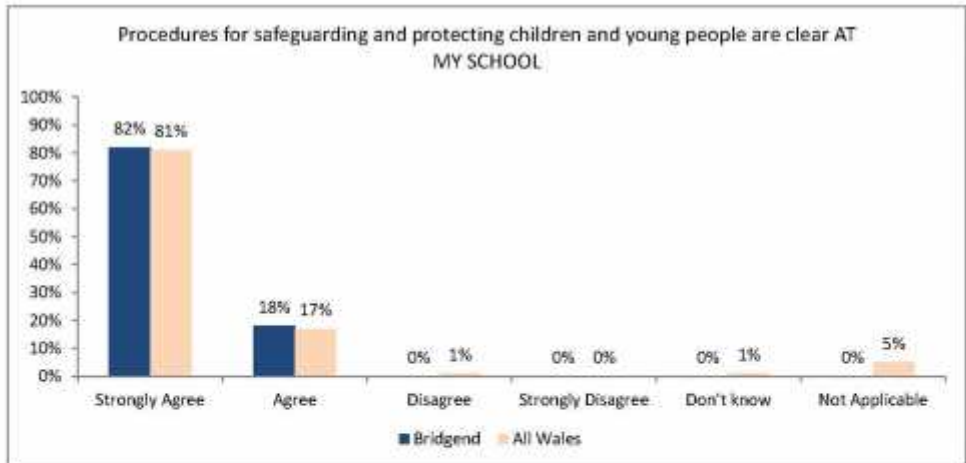
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Bridgend Expressed opinion *	79	-	-	8	21	15	4	31
				10%	27%	19%	5%	39%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	20	344	794	339	79	420
				17%	40%	17%	4%	21%

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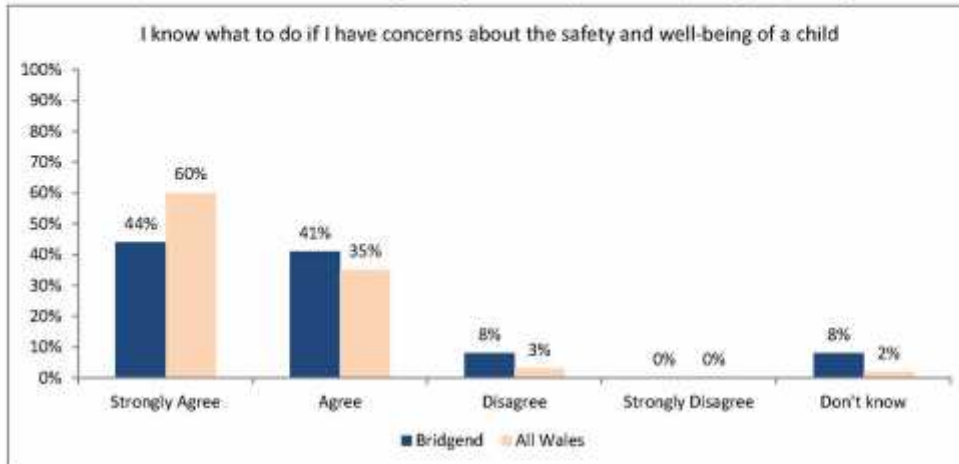
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Not Applicable
Bridgend	79	-	2	16	35	8	2	13	3
Expressed opinion *				22%	47%	11%	3%	18%	4%
All Wales	1996	-	39	701	942	114	14	160	26
Expressed opinion *				36%	49%	6%	1%	8%	1%



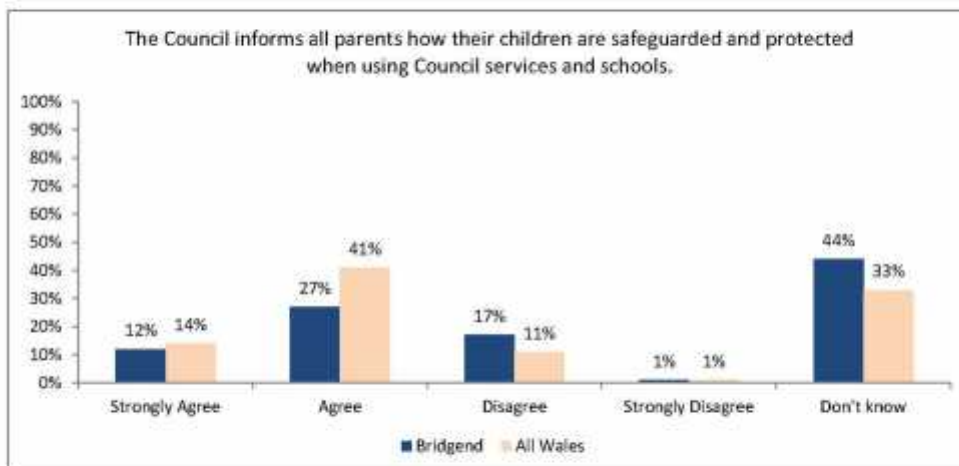
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Not Applicable
Bridgend	79	62	-	14	3	-	-	-	-
Expressed opinion *				82%	18%				
All Wales	1996	1399	34	435	92	3	-	5	28
Expressed opinion *				81%	17%	1%		1%	5%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Bridgend



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Bridgend	79	-	1	34	32	6	-	6
Expressed opinion *				44%	41%	8%		8%
All Wales	1996	-	29	1174	683	64	8	38
Expressed opinion *				60%	35%	3%	0%	2%



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Bridgend	79	-	1	9	21	13	1	34
Expressed opinion *				12%	27%	17%	1%	44%
All Wales	1996	-	27	269	816	213	29	642
Expressed opinion *				14%	41%	11%	1%	33%

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