

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

8 DECEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

ANNUAL REPORT – SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee with information on:

- Safeguarding (Adults & Children);
- Regional Safeguarding Boards;
- Bridgend Corporate Safeguarding Policy;
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE);
- Deprivation of Liberty Standards (DOLS);
- Domestic Abuse;
- Human Trafficking & Anti-Slavery;
- Children and Adult Practice Reviews.

1.2 This report includes information from October 2021 and September 2022.

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**:

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **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.
- **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 Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.
- 3.2 Safeguarding adults includes:
- Protecting their rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect;
 - People and organisations working together to prevent the risk of abuse or neglect, and to stop them from happening;
 - Making sure people's wellbeing is promoted, taking their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs into account.
- 3.3 Safeguarding children and promoting their welfare includes:
- Protecting them from maltreatment or things that are bad for their health or development;
 - Making sure they grow up in circumstances that allow safe and effective care.
- 3.4 Effective safeguarding arrangements should be underpinned by two key principles:
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
 - A person-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of adults and children.
- 3.5 The key pieces of legislation relating to safeguarding children and adults at risk are the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Children Act 1989.
- 3.6 Part 7 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act relates to Safeguarding and includes:
- Definitions of an 'adult and child at risk';
 - A duty on relevant partners to report adults and children at risk;
 - A requirement on a local authority to investigate where they suspect that an adult with care and support needs is at risk of abuse or neglect;
 - The introduction of an Adult Protection and Support Order (APSO);
 - The requirement on the local authority to consider undertaking an investigation when there has been a report that a child is at risk and then carry this out in line with Section 47 of the Children Act 1989;
 - The establishment of a National Safeguarding Board;
 - The functions and procedures of Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children Boards.
- 3.7 Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 sets out the duty on a local authority, with the help of other organisations as appropriate to make enquires if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering harm, to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.
- 3.8 The Wales Safeguarding Procedures launched in November 2019, provide a framework for safeguarding adults and children. Part 5 makes reference to Safeguarding Allegations / Concerns about practitioners and those in positions of trust.

4. Current situation / proposal

Safeguarding Adults

- 4.1 Safeguarding is everyone's business and practitioners in all agencies need to recognise and act when they identify adults at risk. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 was enacted in April 2016. Section 7 refers to safeguarding and created new legislation for adult safeguarding. It now provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales.
- 4.2 The main categories of abuse which are identified within existing procedures and within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act are:
- physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse (and includes abuse taking place in any setting, whether in a private dwelling, an institution or any other place), "financial abuse" which includes:
 - having money or other property stolen;
 - being defrauded;
 - being put under pressure in relation to money or other property;
 - having money or other property misused; and
 - "neglect" which means a failure to meet a person's basic physical, emotional, social or psychological needs, which is likely to result in an impairment of the person's well-being (for example, an impairment of the person's health).
- 4.3 In November 2019 the Wales Safeguarding Procedures were introduced which covers both adults, children and young people. When working with adults who are alleged victims of abuse, the local authority has seven days to complete relevant enquiries. This is to determine if the report meets the threshold for investigation under Adult Safeguarding Procedures. If it is agreed it meets the threshold then strategy discussions and meetings will follow and a Care and Protection Support Plan developed with the individual and/or their family.
- 4.4 If a safeguarding report does not meet the threshold, relevant advice and support is offered and documented on all cases.
- 4.5 Table 1 below shows the number of adult at risk referrals received from 01/10/2021 until 30/9/2022 and also shows the number that met the threshold for Adult Safeguarding procedures:

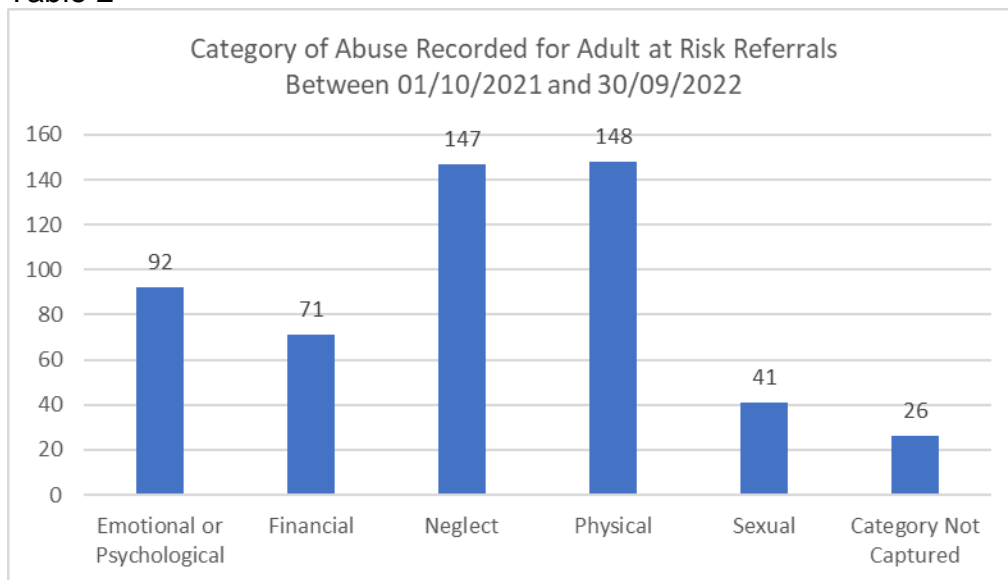
Table 1

		Number of Safeguarding Referrals	Met threshold for Adult Protection Procedures
01/10/2021	to	439	41
30/09/2022			

- 4.6 The highest recorded category of abuse between 01/10/21 and 30/09/22 was physical abuse which accounted for 148 referrals of the total recorded alleged abuse referrals, followed by 147 for neglect, 92 for emotional/psychological abuse, 71 referrals for financial abuse and 41 referrals for sexual abuse.

4.7 Table 2 below shows the category of abuse recorded for adult at risk referrals between 1/10/2021 to 30/9/2022:

Table 2



4.8 The Adult Safeguarding team joined Bridgend’s Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in July 2018. The MASH remained operational throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The co-location of all teams in the MASH has allowed for instant information sharing between agencies which in turn results in a more timely, focused, response to safeguarding concerns. The Adult Safeguarding & Secure Estate Service Manager is also a representative on the joint MASH Quality Assurance Group, which is attended by colleagues from Bridgend MASH and Pontypridd MASH.

4.9 Table 3 shows the number of initial professional concern strategy meetings for practitioners and those in positions of trust working with adults. The number of referrals between 1/10/2021 – 31/10/22 amount to 113 referrals:



Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

- 4.10 The Mental Capacity Act 2005 provides a statutory framework for acting and making decisions on behalf of individuals who lack mental capacity to do so for themselves. People can be deprived of their liberty wherever they live, but in broad terms this is divided between a Care Home / Hospital setting and a Community setting.
- 4.11 In 2007, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) was introduced to provide a legal framework to prevent breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights following the 'Bournewood' judgement. This allows for the Authority, acting as a Supervisory Body, to authorise a DoLS in a Care Home setting when six qualifying assessments are met. If the person is in a Hospital the Health Board are the Supervisory Body and can authorise a DoLS if the qualifying assessments are met. The most fundamental qualifying requirement is that the Care Plan is in the person's (P's) Best Interests.
- 4.12 On 19 March 2014, the Supreme Court handed down its judgement in the case of P v Cheshire West and Cheshire Council and another. The Supreme Court has now confirmed that to determine whether a person is objectively deprived of their liberty there are two key questions to ask, which is described as the 'acid test':
- a) Is the person subject to **continuous supervision** and **control** (all three aspects are necessary)
- AND**
- b) Is the **person free to leave** (The person may not be saying this or acting on it but the issue is about how staff would react if the person did try to leave).
- This now means that if a person is subject both to continuous supervision and control and not free to leave they are deprived of their liberty.**
- 4.13 Where the person resides somewhere other than a Care Home or Hospital the DoLS are not applicable and the Court of Protection (CoP) will authorise a DoLS. In these circumstances the Authority will make an application to the CoP and the type of application is determined on the level of agreement. If all those involved in P's care agree, the application can be made using a streamline procedure.
- 4.14 Due to the 2014 judgement, the number of DoLS referrals continued to increase. Currently the Adult Safeguarding and Secure Estate team employs two full time Best Interest Assessors (BIA) and five Independent Best Interest Assessors who receive a fee for each DoLS assessment completed. These assessors complete between 50 and 60 DoLS assessments per month. Currently there is a small backlog of 80 cases to be allocated.
- 4.15 It is planned that DoLS is replaced with Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS). Unfortunately the implementation of LPS has been delayed by the UK Government, mainly due to the Covid pandemic and a delay in finalising the LPS Code of Practice. A scoping exercise has been undertaken in Bridgend using the new criteria for LPS and the estimated number of LPS applications will increase by at least 50% so in excess of a 1000 plus people coming into scope. LPS will also include young people of 16 and 17 years of age.
- 4.16 Table 4 The data below shows the numbers of DoLS referrals received in Bridgend from 1/10/2021 to 30/09/2022:

Table 4

	Number of DoLS Referrals Received
01/10/2021 to 30/09/22	459

Children Deprived of their Liberty

- 4.17 Bridgend has recognised that children can also be deprived of their liberty. In February 2017 Bridgend was the first local authority in Wales to successfully make an application to lawfully authorise a child to be placed within a residential setting with restrictions that amounted to a deprivation of liberty. Children who are subject to a deprivation of their liberty, are under 16, and have parents who are not able to exercise appropriate parental responsibility will require the High Court (under its inherent jurisdiction) to authorise any such deprivation. Between the ages of 16-18 years the application for authorisation is made using the same process as adults. The Authority is aware of a number of increasing numbers of DoLS applications being made by local authorities for young people who are on the cusp, but as yet do not meet the criteria of being deprived of their liberty. These situations are often managed via a secure accommodation order under Section 25 of the Children’s Act 1989 with Section 119 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 providing further legislation to keep vulnerable children and young people safe.
- 4.18 Since this time Bridgend has implemented a suite of training to raise awareness of the legislation, processes and implications for the Authority in relation to the lawful discharge of duties where children and young people are thought to require such interventions.
- 4.19 Practitioners have received this programme by a Barrister who specialises in this field to ensure that the Authority is able to recognise when circumstances amount to a child being deprived of their liberty and are well placed to respond in a lawful and proportionate manner.

Adult Practice Reviews

- 4.20 Part 7 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the provisions for Safeguarding Adults and Children for all partner agencies. Statutory Guidance also requires Safeguarding Boards to undertake Child Practice Reviews and Adult Practice Reviews as identified. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board’s Practice Review Management Group has a key role in achieving these functions of learning, reviewing and improving safeguarding practice. The Practice Review Management Group will be the platform from which these reviews will be undertaken on behalf of the Safeguarding Board.

Current Adult Practice Reviews

4.21 Bridgend has recently had one extended Adult Practice Review published in the reporting period. Adult J of this review had complex needs arising from past trauma, mental illness and polysubstance misuse and physical health was poor and had a diagnosis of asthma and non-epileptic seizures. The death was unexpected and the cause of death remains unclear. The review considered the multi-agency response to the circumstances and made recommendations for learning which will be monitored via the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Joint Practice Review subgroup.

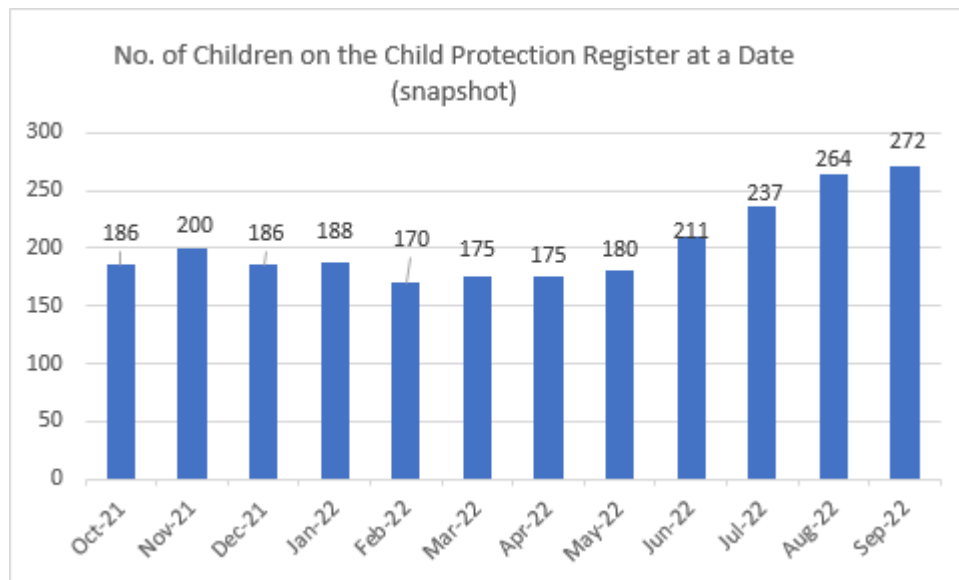
4.22 Learning outcomes from this review:-

- The idea of initiating meetings of the professionals when situations are not progressing – the idea of creating a reflective space to think things through.
- Reviewing who attends Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) – are the right people there?
- Setting up a protocol/arrangement with pharmacists to notify when a prescription is not collected. This would not apply to every uncollected prescription; it would need a flagging system for those who are most at risk/vulnerable.
- More input/development work on coercive control and effective interventions and trauma informed practice.
- On the whole communication and the exchange of information between services and agencies was good and systems were followed appropriately.
- The professional network involved with Adult J were committed and persistent. They worked hard to maintain contact with them.

4.23 There is currently one adult practice review ongoing.

Safeguarding Children

4.24 The Child Protection Register figures for this period are set out below.:



4.25 The below table shows the categories and ages of the children subject to the CPR as of the 30/09/22:

Category of Abuse	Age Group					Total
	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16-18	
Emotional Abuse	3	21	30	33	4	91
Neglect	6	17	24	27	2	76
Neglect and Physical Abuse	2	5	5	4	1	17
Neglect and sexual abuse	1	1	0	1	1	4
Neglect, Physical & Financial Abuse	0	1	1	0	0	2
Neglect, Physical and Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	4	0	4
Physical abuse	4	24	17	24	3	72
Physical and sexual	0	0	0	2	0	2
Physical and Sexual Abuse	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sexual abuse	0	0	2	2	1	5
Total	16	70	79	97	12	274

4.26 As can be seen, the numbers of children subject to the Child Protection Register is steadily rising on a monthly basis. Contributory factors for this are the rise of awareness of child protection factors in the media, the MASH strengthening processes which leads to greater assessments being undertaken, improved training and recognition of child abuse, covid-19 related social challenges and professional awareness of the importance of the duty to report following the tragic deaths of children in Bridgend.

4.27 If professionals agree that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm then their name is placed upon the Child Protection Register. An outline child protection plan is then agreed between all professionals at the conference. In addition to this a

core group of professionals is agreed. This core group are then responsible for implementing and monitoring the plan. The initial core group is held within 10 working days of the conference and thereafter on a 6 weekly basis until the review Child Protection Case Conference 3 months later. If the child's name remains on the Child Protection Register, subsequent review conferences are held every 6 months or sooner depending on the level of risk identified.

4.28 The level of work has increased in the MASH and IAA Service. The table below shows the distribution of this work:

1st Oct 2021- to 30th Sept 2022	
Number of Safeguarding Contacts	6515
No of new assessments completed	2674
No of strategy meetings held	1603
No of section 47s investigations	1221
No Initial child protection conferences	326
No of Review child Protection Conferences	575

Public Law Outline (PLO)

4.29 The PLO is a legal process which was introduced in April 2014. The PLO sets out streamlined case management procedures for dealing with public law children's cases. The aim is to avoid care proceedings if possible and for those cases where proceedings are necessary, identify and focus on the key issues for the child, with the aim of making the best decisions for the child within the timetable set by the Court (26 weeks), and avoiding the need for unnecessary evidence or hearings. Under the PLO, the 'pre proceedings process' is considered when the above has not been effective with a family and the legal threshold is met i.e. when the child/ren is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. This process is followed when the Authority has assessed that the risks are able to be managed safely whilst the children remain in the care of their parents/primary carers. The process allows the parents to obtain legal advice and a legal meeting takes place with the parents and lawyers. In this meeting the Authority sets out clearly its concerns, its plan to help the family, and the consequences if no progress is made. The process is set for a realistic period of time for families to engage in the necessary services to ensure that the child/ren's needs are met and they are kept safe from harm.

4.30 In the first instance, the family will receive a 'pre proceedings letter' which sets out:

- the Authority's concerns;
- what the Authority has done to try to address those concerns;
- what the family need to do in order to address those concerns;
- the likely outcome if they fail to do so which involves the Authority considering whether the children are able to remain in the family home and whether care proceedings should be issued;
- informing them of a meeting that they must attend with legal representation.

Care Proceedings

- 4.31 This is a last resort situation for the Authority and will only be issued when the Authority has attempted to do all it can to work with and support the family but there has been no change and the child/ren are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm should they remain in the care of parents or primary carers. In Bridgend there are currently 26 cases subject of these proceedings compared to 28 in July 2018. The process following the conclusion of care proceedings is dependent upon the care plan proposed by the Authority and agreed by the Court at the final hearing.

Child Practice Reviews

- 4.32 In 2013, Child Practice Reviews replaced what were known as Serious Case Reviews (SCRs). This new process stems from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales report published in October 2009 - *Improving Practice to Protect Children in Wales: An Examination of the Role of Serious Case Reviews*. This work was pivotal to where we are today and concluded that action was required to replace the SCR process which had become ineffective in improving practice and inter-agency working.
- 4.33 A key element of the new framework is different types of review – known as ‘concise’ and ‘extended’ – depending on the circumstances of the child involved. Child Practice Reviews will be effective learning tools where it is more important to consider how agencies worked together. The formal review processes are underpinned by multi-agency professional forums that are critical to improving practice and will allow practitioners to reflect on cases – and not only where things have gone wrong – in an informed and supported environment.
- 4.34 The guidance sets out arrangements for multi-agency Child Practice Reviews in circumstances of a significant incident where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected.
- 4.35 The overall purpose of reform of the review system is to promote a positive culture of multi-agency child protection learning and reviewing in local areas, for which the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and partner agencies hold responsibility.
- 4.36 Like adult reviews, the purpose of the review is to identify learning for future practice and involve practitioners, managers and senior officers in exploring the detail and context of agencies’ work with the child(ren) and family. The review is intended to generate professional and organisational learning and promote improvement in future practice
- 4.37 At the time of the report there were 4 Child Practice Reviews being undertaken in BCBC currently and once published a programme of work will be undertaken to disseminate the learning to Children’s Services practitioners. All Child Practice Reviews concerning Bridgend children are reported to the Cabinet Corporate Parenting Committee once they have been published by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board.

Regional Safeguarding Boards

- 4.38 Part 7 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 set out the need to establish regional Safeguarding Boards for children and adults and specify a lead partner agency for each Board. As from 1st April 2019, Bridgend became part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (for both children and adults) which covers Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) and Merthyr Tydfil localities, with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (CBC) as the lead partner agency. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board's Annual Plan 2022-2023 is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.39 The objectives of the Regional Safeguarding Board is to protect adults and children who are experiencing, or at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm and to prevent them becoming at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm.
- 4.40 Membership of Safeguarding Boards is prescribed within the Act. A Board includes senior representatives from agencies who exercise functions or who are engaged in activities in relation to children and adults. At a minimum a Board must include a representative from:
- Each Local Authority
 - Police
 - Local Health Board
 - NHS Trust
 - Probation services provider(s)
 - The Chair of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board is the Director of Social Services, RCT Council

Governance

- 4.41 The Safeguarding Board has published an outcome focused Annual Plan for 2022-2023. There is a committee and sub-group structure sitting under the Board to support the delivery of the Annual Plan on behalf of the Board. Each Sub-group uses performance measures to report on a quarterly basis to the Board, via the Joint Operational Committee, and to escalate any risks and issues against the delivery of the plan and for decision and action from the Board. This enables the Board to take ownership of its work at strategic level and to provide leadership to subgroups. There is an established business unit based in RCT that supports the Boards in this respect. The team is funded by partner agencies through a Safeguarding Board pooled budget and consists of one Business Manager, two Business Coordinators, a Communications and Engagement Officer and two Business Administrators.
- 4.42 The Terms of Reference for the Safeguarding Board is reviewed bi-annually and this promotes the requirement for accountability in respect of all Board partner agencies. There are clear definitions for professional challenge and holding partners to account. Each Board member is required to sign up to a member Role Profile to which they are individually accountable in relation to their contribution to the Board and attendance at Board meetings. The Joint Operational Committee reports to the Board on the progress of the Sub-groups.
- 4.43 The sub-groups of the Safeguarding Board are:
- Children's Quality Assurance Sub-group
 - Adults Quality Assurance Sub-group

- Joint Adult child Review Group
- Protocols and Procedures Group
- Training and Learning Group
- Engagement, Communications and Participation Group

The Terms of Reference, Membership and sub-groups are currently being reviewed as part of the new Regional Safeguarding Board arrangements.

- 4.44 The three priorities areas in the Board's plan for 2022-2023 are:
- Keeping our Communities Safe by Working Together
 - A Renewed Focus on Prevention and Early Intervention
 - Moving Beyond the Pandemic – Recovery and Reflection

- 4.45 The Safeguarding Board will deliver this strategic priority in conjunction with the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Groups to achieve the best outcomes possible for victims and their families. The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 sets out the requirements for an improved collective public sector response to the way these issues are addressed, to support victims and to prevent abuse from happening. There are Steering Groups that sits under the Cwm Taf and Bridgend Community Safety Partnerships to deliver regional strategies for VAWDASV.

Improve Communications

- 4.46 The Safeguarding Board is required to raise awareness with the public of the need to protect and prevent children, young people and adults from becoming at risk of abuse, neglect and other forms of harm, and provide information about how this can be achieved. As part of developing a positive culture of learning the Board also needs to ensure that information is widely disseminated within the workforce to inform them about best practice and learning arising from reviews, audits and other Board activities. The Board has an established group whose aim is to ensure that there are clear processes in place for the identification of engagement and participation needs and to capture the activities of partner agencies in meeting these needs.

National Safeguarding Board

- 4.47 The National Safeguarding Board is an advisory board that advises Welsh Government on the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard people in Wales. The Board members have been subject to an open public appointments process and ultimately appointed by the Minister.
- 4.48 One of the National Board's duties is to provide advice and support to regional Safeguarding Boards and each Board member has been assigned to a regional board.

Bridgend Locality Safeguarding & Community Safety Group

- 4.49 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 makes it clear that safeguarding is a shared responsibility and depends upon effective joint working between agencies and professionals that have different roles and expertise. Bridgend Locality Safeguarding & Community Safety Group is chaired by the Corporate Director of Social Services & Wellbeing, which meets on a quarterly basis.

The group's membership consists of representatives from within the Local Authority and partner agencies for example Education, Health, HMP Parc and YOI and the third sector.

- 4.50 The Bridgend Locality Safeguarding & Community Safety Group focuses on Bridgend specific matters as well as the regional operational issues which are relevant to Bridgend and receive and review policy and guidance from the regional boards and national enquiries whilst ensuring that there are effective local monitoring arrangements.

Bridgend Corporate Safeguarding Policy

- 4.51 Safeguarding is the responsibility of all Directorates across the Authority. With a view to promoting awareness of this and raising the profile of Safeguarding across the whole of the Council, a Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been developed and implemented. This sets out the Council's duty and commitment to safeguard and promote the health, well-being and human rights of adults and children at risk and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services such that individuals can live their life free from harm, abuse and neglect. This policy has been updated to reflect the changes pertaining to safeguarding as laid out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and accompanying statutory guidance.
- 4.52 A designated corporate safeguarding page on Bridgend's intranet allows practitioners immediate access to information to support decision making and the referral process if required. It also signposts individuals to key officers in both adults and children's safeguarding.
- 4.53 The Council recognises that it has a commitment to ensure that all members of staff have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities when working with children and adults at risk and the requirement for reporting concerns.
- 4.54 All employees are required to complete the safeguarding e-learning awareness level module. More specialist single and inter-agency training opportunities are available for those who work routinely with children or adults at risk at a level appropriate to their role and responsibilities.
- 4.55 The Corporate Director of Social Services and Well-being chairs a monthly Corporate Safeguarding Group which includes representatives from Social Services and Well-being, Education and Family Support and the Chief Executives directorate (human resources, housing and community safety). The group oversees a corporate safeguarding dashboard which includes information on safeguarding performance from all parts of the Council and which is reported to the Cabinet Corporate Parenting Committee (CCMB) on a monthly basis. The dashboard as at end of September 2022 is appended to this report as **Appendix 2**.

Child Sexual Exploitation

- 4.56 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse which involves an element of exchange. Any child can be sexually exploited irrespective of gender, ethnicity or sexuality. CSE can be perpetrated in many different ways. The way in which children experience CSE is diverse and may be part of a complex picture of interrelated safeguarding issues. online and offline exploitation often overlap.
- 4.57 Perpetrators of CSE come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, they are predominantly male but females do offend. They act as individuals, in groups and in gangs and offenders may be family members.
- 4.58 Peer-on-peer abuse needs to be understood in the context in which it occurs and children who abuse need support. All Wales Practice Guidance on children where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour is available for use in conjunction with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.
- 4.59 Children rarely disclose CSE and the identification of CSE is particularly reliant on the knowledge and understanding of practitioners and professionals. Everyone who works with children should be alert to the signs that a child is being sexually exploited and understand their duty to report a child at risk.
- 4.60 If Child Sexual Exploitation is suspected a multiagency strategy meeting will be held and partner agencies invited such as Police, Health, Education, Youth Offending and Barnardos.
- 4.61 The Council has developed an Exploitation Screening Tool within the MASH Service and this has since been implemented in Children's Services. This tool supports the identification of exploitation and guides the practitioner in how to best address these concerns. The tool can also be used as a means to gather intelligence about geographical areas where exploitation is occurring and individuals involved.
- 4.62 An interim Group Manager for Practice Improvement in Bridgend has been appointed. This practitioner has a strong background in Exploitation and is using her expertise to support and guide our processes and services in this area.
- 4.63 The number of CSE reports between 01/10/2021 and 30/09/2022 is 45.

Safeguarding in Education

- 4.64 Within the Education and Family Support Directorate the Education Engagement Team (EET) was established in 2018 and its remit includes the safeguarding in education role.
- 4.65 EET support children from groups identified by Estyn as being vulnerable or potentially vulnerable such as: excluded pupils, care-experienced children, those known to Youth Justice Services, those with English as an Additional Language and Home Educated Learners. This "joined up" approach means that the team are able to offer schools ongoing advice and guidance around a range of areas and have knowledge and skills in safeguarding, child protection as well as education. The EET

team are co-located within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to enhance this “joined up” approach with Social Services and Wellbeing.

- 4.66 EET deliver the Designated Safeguarding Lead training to schools. They also facilitate the whole school safeguarding training to individual schools. Within the remit of EET, they also facilitate and coordinate twice yearly Designated Safeguarding Lead Forums. These meetings cover regular safeguarding and information updates as well as training sessions from internal and external speakers and agencies. This year, there will be information and training on exclusion, county lines, exploitation and Looked After Children training all of which have aspects which link into CSE and CSE awareness and risk and vulnerability.
- 4.67 The Education and Family Support directorate in partnership with Social Services and Well-being are commencing a safeguarding in education working group. The aim of this group is to bring a select group of Headteachers and Senior Managers within the local authority to look at the issues affecting children in schools, improve understanding on threshold, identify opportunities for further joint working and inform future training for schools in relation to safeguarding.
- 4.68 Further to this, the Authority will be re-commencing the Team Around the School model for Secondary schools. The aim of which is to identify children and families who currently presenting with some low level concerns and consider whether any additional support could be offered through Early Help, Youth Justice Services or other Education and Family Support services.
- 4.69 Schools in Bridgend have also been undertaking audits of their safeguarding approaches. Schools have used an audit tool developed by Estyn to satisfy themselves that their approaches to safeguarding children are robust. This process commenced last year and will continue to be undertaken on an annual basis. Findings from last year highlight evidence of good understanding of safeguarding responsibilities, evidence of partnership working and up to date policies and procedures on safeguarding. Areas for development included the role of the governing body being enhanced and to improve engagement with parents and carers in relation to their understanding of safeguarding issues.
- 4.70 Nearly all of the secondary schools participate in a team around the school forum which discusses and supports children where there are concerns around educational or wellbeing needs - including potential CSE concerns, and this forum incorporates Early Help and Police as well as the Vulnerable Groups team and the Education Welfare Service.

Domestic Abuse

- 4.71 Bridgend takes a holistic approach to domestic abuse and has a wide range of services. The Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence Act (Wales) 2015 (VAWDASV) received Royal Assent on 29 April 2015 and the aim of the Act is to improve public sector responses through strong leadership and a consistent focus on prevention, protection and support.
- 4.72 It ensures a shared, collective strategic vision through the development of national/local/regional strategies to tackle ‘violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence’ in all its forms. It further seeks to raise the issue of gender-

based abuse, domestic abuse and sexual violence among senior leaders by placing responsibility on them to effect changes necessary to improve the safety of victims and their children.

- 4.73 Anybody can be a victim of abuse irrespective of their age, ethnicity, gender, etc., and the Act recognises this.
- 4.74 There are six objectives within the National Strategy that Bridgend also follows:
Objective 1: Increase awareness and challenge attitudes of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh Population
Objective 2: Increased awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong
Objective 3: Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety
Objective 4: Make early intervention and prevention a priority
Objective 5: Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors
Objective 6: Provide victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Wales

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

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 Act (Wales) 2014 (SSWBA), 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.
- 7.2 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 – Social Services is led by demand and the SSWBA focusses on wellbeing outcomes for the future. There is a requirement to safeguard and protect both children and adults in the longer term and, as such the Local Authority has acknowledged the need to bring together both the Safeguarding of adults and children as one safeguarding service.
- Prevention – the implementation of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub has enabled better sharing of information between agencies at the earliest stage to anticipate safeguarding and child protection at the earliest opportunity.
- Integration – the implementation of the SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners, to ensure care, support and protection of all and more specifically it's most vulnerable. The report evidences consultation between professionals and partner agencies with this regard and with a specific focus to the safeguarding and protection of people within the Borough of Bridgend.
- Collaboration – This is currently managed in order to provide the best possible intervention for children and people across Bridgend.
- Involvement – the key stakeholders are the people who use children and adults social care services. There is considerable engagement through the inclusion of surveys, stakeholder meetings, feedback forms and the complaints process. The provision of accessible information and advice helps to ensure that the voice of adults, children and young people is heard and responded to.

8. Financial implications

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

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the annual report and provide any comments upon the report.

Claire Marchant
Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
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Contact officers **Terri Warrilow**
Safeguarding & Secure Estate Service Manager
Telephone: **(01656) 642476**
Email: Terri.Warrilow@bridgend.gov.uk

Telephone: **Raeanna Grainger**
Group Manager IAA & Safeguarding
(01656) 642360
Email: Raeanna.Grainger@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Civic Offices, Bridgend, CF31 4WR

Background documents:

None