

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2
HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET,
BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor F D Bletsoe – Chairperson

E L P Caparros	P Davies	P Ford	D M Hughes
M Lewis	RL Penhale-Thomas	A Wathan	AJ Williams
R Williams			

Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Raeanna Grainger	Independent Reviewing Service Manager
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Carys Lord	Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Jessica Mclellan	Scrutiny Officer

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Paul Davies and Councillor Richard Williams gave their apologies that they would need to leave the meeting early.

Councillor Amanda Williams gave her apologies that she needed to leave the meeting at 11.30am due to an urgent matter arising.

Invitee:

Councillor Jane Gebbie, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16. UPDATE ON THE CARE INSPECTORATE WALES INSPECTIONS OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S REGULATED SERVICES IN ADULT SOCIAL CARE FOR 2022

The Head of Adult Social Care presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with the outcome of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspections of Bridgend County Borough Council's Regulated Services in Adult Social Care during 2022.

In response to a question regarding the distinction between Priority Action Notices (PANs) and Areas for Improvement (AFIs), the Head of Adult Social Care advised that when a PAN is issued, the Local Authority is given a deadline to meet the requirement set and if the requirement is not met by the deadline, the Authority could be referred to an Enforcement Panel. She continued that AFIs were reviewed by CIW on reinspection and if insufficient improvements had been made, they could become a PAN.

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022

The Committee thanked staff, acknowledging the difficulty of the job and the Head of Adult Services confirmed that the report had been shared with them.

In response to a question as to whether the service was surprised by any of the PANs or AFIs, the Head of Adult Social Care advised that they were already aware of some of the issues which were raised in PANs. She reassured the Committee that the service was working with management around all PANs and AFIs in a timely way.

In response to a query regarding the prospect of the resumption of Member rota visits to adult care homes and children's homes, the Leader of the Council acknowledged the value of the rota visits for Members, staff and service users. He also recognised the benefit of them on the Authority's governance and assurance arrangements as, prior to the pandemic, visits were undertaken not only to provisions managed by the Authority but also to commissioned independent and third sector provisions. He advised that Members need to be paired up for visits for safeguarding purposes and that they would look to reintroduce the visits next year.

The Head of Adult Social Care reiterated how rota visits were an important element of quality assurance processes and advised that a plan would be devised regarding the reintroduction of the visits which would commence with Member training. She suggested that rota visits start with the in-Council services before being rolled to the independent sector.

In response to a Member query regarding whether the service was up to date with the roll-out of the mandatory training and the reasons why CIW had reported that there was not full compliance with the training, the Head of Adult Social Care confirmed that the mandatory training was on a rolling programme; some annually, some every three years and some at induction. Prior to the pandemic, the rolling programme ensured that individuals knew when their training was due but that during the pandemic, the focus had been on keeping people safe, engaging with individuals and delivering front-line services.

Additionally, there was a backlog on training due to the limit on the numbers of people who could be present in a room together and the impact that social distancing had on the training of manual handling, for example. She continued that about 9 to 12 months ago, people had been allowed to come together more and that there had been a significant amount of commissioning work for training. She highlighted that the positive comments in the report demonstrated that the mandatory training was not impacting on staff doing their jobs. She also highlighted the difficulty of staff who may be booked on courses and were unable to attend due to covering shifts at short notice. Therefore, the service was developing e-learning and had bought iPads for staff to be able to access certain training remotely. Whilst the service was not yet up to date with mandatory training, she assured the Committee that there was a programme of work in place and she felt confident that they would be up to date in the next 6 months.

A Member asked whether each home had a Welsh speaker and if not, whether staff were trained in the language, highlighting that first language Welsh speakers living with dementia often revert to the use of the Welsh language.

The Provider Services Manager advised that there was at least one Welsh speaking member of staff in each of the four residential homes.

The Leader advised that the Authority offers and encourages members of staff to take up training opportunities and the offer of free training to improve their Welsh language skills. Whilst acknowledging the challenges of recruiting into Social Care roles, he

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022

advised that whilst not essential, use of the Welsh language was a welcome skill and highlighted the Authority's work with Bridgend College to help identify the next generation of Social Care workers. He echoed the Member's comments regarding first language Welsh speakers living with dementia, who may have become used to using the English language in their adult years, reverting to their use of their childhood use of the Welsh language and highlighted an initiative the Authority was supporting to encourage the use of Welsh generally in homes which had been applauded by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Head of Adult Social Care advised that they always seek to meet people's communication needs highlighting an example of the efforts of the staff of one home who had learned sign language to communicate with resident with a hearing impairment.

In response to a Member query regarding what policies CIW had identified in the PAN and the work entailed to address them, the Head of Adult Social Care advised that there were a range of policies and that they had until the end of March 2023 to address them. She advised that the Authority had worked with Public Health Wales during pandemic around infection control but that the policy needed updating and that they were working with colleagues in the Health Board to help get the Medication Policy in line with national guidelines. She also highlighted that there were some corporate policies such as whistleblowing and the complaints process that needed addressing but reassured that there was a plan in place for each of the policies.

A Member asked, with reference to Ty Cwm Ogwr (TCO), how the AFIs around personal plans and supervision had arisen and how confident the service was in achieving the improvement by the end of March 2023.

The Head of Adult Social Care confirmed that TCO had come back into Council ownership in January 2020 from the independent sector which had different processes to Local Authority. She highlighted that the pandemic hit in March 2020 and the priorities were on keeping people safe and meeting their care and support needs. Moving out of the pandemic, the service worked with the management at TCO to transfer some of the Local Authority's procedures regarding paperwork and, over the last 6 months, there had been a very targeted piece of work to ensure that all personal plans were of the expected standard. She advised that there was a rolling programme of supervision and highlighted that training was linked to overarching matters affecting the whole Directorate. She highlighted that there was a unique set of circumstances that led to the situation at TCO but was confident that there would be an improved position when CIW returned.

In response to a query about the effect the pandemic had on policies, staff and workloads, the Head of Adult Social Care advised that there had been a steep learning curve regarding infection control particularly around the introduction of personal protection equipment and the speed at which Regulations and Guidance changed and needed implementation. However, she highlighted that staff had been very adaptable and flexible and had shown commitment to the individuals they supported. She advised that whilst the Authority had always had an Infection Control Policy, CIW had picked up that it had not been re-written post-pandemic with the lessons learned.

The Head of Adult Social Care thanked the Provider Services Manager and the Group Manager for Direct Care Provider Services for their leadership and hours worked during the pandemic to meet the regulations for the benefit of the service users. The Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing (the Corporate Director) also thanked all colleagues in residential care services and the Head of Adult Social Care.

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022

The Chairperson advised that there were no further questions for the Invitees, thanked Invitees for their attendance and, advised that if they were not required for the next Item, they may leave the meeting.

RESOLVED: Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee requested:

That priority be given to rolling out Member Development Training in the New Year and work to pair up Members be expedited to allow Rota visits to children and adult residential provisions to recommence as soon as possible.

17. ANNUAL REPORT - SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS

The Corporate Director presented the report, the purpose of which was to update the Committee with information regarding a number of safeguarding arrangements across Adult and Children's Social Care and highlighted that the report included information from October 2021 to September 2022.

She also highlighted that safeguarding covers all Directorates across the Council and that safeguarding is everybody's business and the need for individuals and Members to understand their personal responsibilities.

In response to a Member query as to whether there had been an omission in the report regarding Human Trafficking and Anti-Slavery, the Corporate Director advised that they fell under the Criminal Exploitation category but acknowledged that it was an area of safeguarding where they needed to improve data collection. Working closely with the Regional Safeguarding Board and other statutory partners to understand the number of cases in existence, she hoped for an improved data capture that would be evidenced in future annual reports.

The Leader acknowledged that crimes such as human trafficking and modern-day slavery were hidden crimes that happened in communities, not just in big cities. He highlighted the work of the Community Safety Partnership which had input from the Local Authority and the Police, Fire and Probation services with a strong focus on addressing the crimes. He highlighted the importance of reporting concerns so that they could be explored in order to protect the most vulnerable people but acknowledged that people could be nervous or unsure before making a report and encouraged those people to seek advice if they had any concerns.

The Corporate Director advised that whilst an increase in referrals could be a challenge on resources, they welcomed reports of safeguarding concerns and acknowledged the need for people reporting to feel safe in making a report. She referred to the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board and the outcome of the recent Child Practice Review which had highlighted the importance of raising awareness of how to report a safeguarding concern.

In response to a Member query as to what measures were in place to safeguard the homeless, particularly during colder weather and whether there was a list of warm hubs, the Corporate Director advised that there was a telephone number and website to readily report concerns about a rough sleeper or someone who may be homeless. In addition, there were links on the Council's website to the Warm Hubs across the County Borough and how they could be accessed. Support was also available via a range of grants, support through Early Help and preventative and statutory services to provide individuals and families with urgent access to means to keep safe and warm.

There were also a wide range of mechanisms to support people at risk of homelessness such as the Discretionary Housing Payments, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, fuel support and various cost-of-living schemes. The Corporate Director highlighted the links with third sector partners in terms of food poverty and with Employability Bridgend coordinating work around the cost-of-living crisis.

The Leader referred to the Streetlink app and telephone service which allows people to place an alert regarding someone they are concerned about who is sleeping rough and a check is made on that person. He advised that whilst the people may not take up the offer of assistance, support was available all year-round including food, drink and comfort facilities which were delivered jointly with a number of partners including the Wallich.

In response to a Member query regarding whether temperature levels may trigger support, the Leader acknowledged that there could be variances in temperature across the Borough and advised that there were at least three weather stations which were used for deployment of gritting lorries and agreed to investigate whether the stations were also used to deploy other services.

In response to a Member query regarding the availability of funding to assist organisations with the setting up and provision of Warm Hubs, the Leader advised that the initial work needed was to identify and map the provision available. He highlighted that Warm Hubs would be supporting vulnerable people and advised that they would be looking to issue organisations running Warm Hubs with information and advice on the reporting of safeguarding concerns. In response to a request, he agreed to seek an update regarding the Welsh Government grant funding.

A Member asked whether safeguarding checks were undertaken on the organisations offering to set up Warm Hubs and the Leader advised that most of the provision seemed to be offered by existing organisations which already had safeguarding policies and checks in place. However, if there were new organisations, which did not usually interact with the public, they would need to ensure that the safeguarding implications were understood.

In relation to Member query regarding the process followed in order to establish the threshold for Adult Safeguarding procedures and what happens to those who do not meet the threshold, the Safeguarding and Secure Estate Manager advised that since the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, when a safeguarding referral is received, the Authority has 7 days in which to make relevant enquiries and checks. She advised that there were a number of possible outcomes to referrals but stressed that no referral was left without an outcome, either:

1. The referral was not quite as deemed at the outset resulting in signposting to information and advice.
2. The individual may be referred back to their Social Worker with relevant recommendations from safeguarding.
3. If criminality was identified, there would be police involvement.
4. Commencement of Adult Safeguarding Procedures.

She continued that reporting to Welsh Government was required on a regular basis and that if enquiries took longer than the statutory timescale of 7 days, they had to be justified.

In relation to a query regarding the different statutory timescales in Adult and Children safeguarding, the Group Manager for IAA & Safeguarding advised that in Children's

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022

Social Care, a Core Group should be held within 10 working days following the Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) where it was determined to place the child's name on the Child Protection Register (CPR) and then 4 to 6 weeks thereafter.

The Corporate Director advised that when a safeguarding referral for children was received, Social Services need to make an initial screening decision within 24 hours whereas for adults it is 7 days. In Children's Social Care, a Strategy Meeting may determine that a Section 47 Child Protection inquiry is needed to be undertaken within 15 days. Following the inquiry, the child's name could be placed on the CPR, following an ICPC.

In response to a Member query regarding the process following receipt of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) referrals, the Safeguarding and Secure Estate Manager advised that the Authority received around 50 to 60 referrals each month which were allocated by date order. In order to determine whether someone would meet the Deprivation of Liberty criteria, there were 6 assessments that needed to be undertaken by 2 practitioners; one a doctor trained in mental health and the other a best interest assessor and only on the conclusion of all 6 assessments could the outcome be determined.

She continued that the Authority report to Welsh Government the number of DoLS referrals received, how many were authorised and whether they were standard or urgent authorisations and how many referrals were withdrawn with reasons why. She agreed to provide this data to the Committee.

A Member noted the exponential rise in the number of children on the CPR and asked whether there was an action plan to try and reduce numbers or to ensure that those who were on the CPR were receiving the necessary support.

The Corporate Director advised that they had continued to see an increase in numbers noting that there were 299 children on the CPR at the end of November. She highlighted that there had been a rise in the number of contacts through the front door resulting in an increased number of strategy meetings and assessments. She also highlighted the significant additional protections given to a child who is on the CPR, including the number of statutory visits by a Social Worker and that a child remains on the CPR until a Multi-Agency Meeting was satisfied that the safeguarding arrangements were sufficient to determine that a child could be deregistered.

In response to a Member query as to whether the numbers were anticipated to continue to rise and about the resources necessary to mitigate against it, she advised that services were operating considerably above establishment due to the additional work. She referred to a range of actions in the Performance Evaluation Inspection Action Plan and the 3-year Strategic Improvement Plan regarding workforce including the implementation of the Social Work Support Officer role. She acknowledged the strategic challenges including financial sustainability and advised that the Institute of Public Care was undertaking work to look at whole system solutions, but they had advised that the increased contact would likely continue for at least a further two years. The Corporate Director highlighted the importance of a preventative approach to achieve the best safe outcomes where appropriate and the implementation of the model of practice, 'Signs of Safety'. The outcome of the whole system review would need to be considered by Cabinet when concluded.

A Member queried whether the tragic child death in Bridgend had impacted on the increase in contacts and the Group Manager for IAA & Safeguarding agreed that it would likely have given the public the confidence to report a child they were concerned about. The service viewed the increase as a positive and highlighted that they wanted to

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022

continue to work with members of public and professionals around awareness of child abuse and the need to protect children.

In response to a Member query regarding the timescales for a Section 47 investigation, the Group Manager for IAA & Safeguarding advised that they are undertaken in 10 working days and a strategy meeting convened thereafter to determine the next steps. If the outcome was to proceed to an ICPC, the conference would be held within 15 working days. She highlighted that social work capacity had been strengthened in IAA and MASH and that they were now successfully meeting statutory timescales on a much more consistent basis. It was noted that the capacity was not funded through core budgets but through ear marked reserves and a sustainability plan was needed.

In relation to whether Social Services had sufficient resources to work through cases and to bring numbers down, she advised that despite excellent in-house and external resources, there were sometimes waiting lists for some services and the whole systems review needed to determine if these were focussed sufficiently on the needs of families with the most significant challenges. She acknowledged that one of the biggest challenges had been workforce but that there was work ongoing to address that but, in the meantime, they had agency staff to ensure statutory duties were being met.

The Corporate Director highlighted that in the previous financial year, the Directorate had benefitted from considerable earmarked reserves resulting in an underspend position. However, the procurement of a managed team, partly made up with agency staff, which was helping to meet the statutory timescales, was putting them in an overspend position and she advised that recruitment of permanent staff would continue to be a challenge for a number of years.

The Leader advised that there was a nationwide trend of rising numbers of children needing support. He acknowledged that whilst the tragic child death in Bridgend may have had an impact on the number of contacts coming into the service in Bridgend, he advised that there were also a number of other factors which contributed to children being at risk, including the impact of the pandemic where children remained at home, pressures of the cost-of living and housing crises and domestic abuse.

In relation to the resources and training necessary to undertake a Section 47 investigation, the Group Manager for IAA & Safeguarding advised that they are often undertaken by one Social Worker but joint visiting and co-working was encouraged. She advised that statutory timescales were now largely being met and that timescales were actively monitored on a daily basis to identify any cases that might fall outside of timescales.

She advised that the mandatory 'Back to Basics' training, which looked at processes, timescales and skills was being rolled out for all staff, including agency staff, and that the uptake figures were monitored at the weekly managers' meeting.

In response to a query regarding raising awareness of the Regional Safeguarding Board (the Board), the Corporate Director provided some background to the establishment of the Board. She acknowledged that structures on a regional level could be deemed as less visible and their role less understood and agreed to share with Members a website which sets out what the Board does, its statutory partners and has links to policies and procedures. She highlighted the leadership role the Board took in the recent Child Practice Review and advised that the inclusion of the Board's Annual Plan was for greater visibility of its role in overseeing the accountability of all partners.

In response to a Member query regarding reporting safeguarding concerns, the Corporate Director advised that referrals should be made to local services and clarified

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022

that the responsibility of the Board was to hold individual safeguarding organisation to account in terms of policies, procedures and training and the commissioning and publishing of Practice Reviews. She highlighted that the main interface with the Board from a public perspective would be in case of a safeguarding procedures complaint.

A Member noted the importance of communication between schools and safeguarding and, in relation to the establishment of the safeguarding in education working group, asked whether best practice would be shared from this.

The Group Manager for IAA & Safeguarding noted the resources and implications arising from safeguarding in schools and recognised the need for positive relationships between children's services and schools. The working group meetings had been diarised for the New Year and would consider advice on when to make referrals, how to improve the information in referrals and the rolling out of training.

The Corporate Director advised that there was a lot of work with the Education Engagement team regarding productive and effective professional relationships to ensure that safeguarding was dealt with across all agencies in the most effective and timely way.

The Leader advised that schools had recently carried out a self-evaluation of safeguarding arrangements and was pleased that some schools had identified the need for improvement and had an enthusiasm and willingness to work together with the Authority. He highlighted that schools were at the forefront of safeguarding and wellbeing as, second only to at home, it is where children spend most of their time and he recognised the importance of the regular daily contact and relationships children have with their teachers which could assist with identifying potential problems. He acknowledged that the joint working with schools had been impacted by the pandemic but that as relationships were being rebuilt, there was the opportunity to consider how systems in place could be strengthened further.

The Chairperson advised that Members of the Committee who wanted to ask questions had all spoken, so as there were no further questions for the invitees, thanked them for their attendance and advised that they may leave the meeting.

RESOLVED: Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee made the following Recommendation:

1. The Committee welcomed the up-to-date information presented in the Annual Report – Safeguarding of Children and Adults and indicated their preference that future presentations of this report similarly cover the period October to September rather than April to March (financial year).

and the Committee requested:

3. A list of Warm Hubs where Members can refer those in need.
4. Whether the weather stations positioned around the County could be used to deploy other services, particularly including services to assist the homeless.
5. An update on the rollout of the Welsh Government funding to support Warm Hubs.
6. In relation to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards:

- a. How many standard referrals were received and how many were authorised;
- b. How many urgent referrals were received and how many were authorised;
- c. How many referrals were withdrawn and the reasons why.

7. A link to the website setting out the purpose of the Regional Safeguarding Board and its policies and procedures.

8. Confirmation that a reminder of how to report safeguarding concerns has been circulated to staff and Members.

18. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee with the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A for discussion and consideration, requested any specific information the Committee identified to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wished to attend, requested the Committee to identify any further items for consideration on the FWP having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3 and asked the Committee to note that the FWP for the Committee would be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee raised concern regarding the large number of reports scheduled for the following meeting in February 2023. The Scrutiny Officer reassured Members that clarification was being sought from the Corporate Director, in conjunction with the Chair, as to whether the items could be grouped together into one or two larger items, and it was therefore unlikely that there would be as many items for consideration.

There were no further items identified for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3, and this could be revisited at the next meeting.

There were no requests to include specific information in the item for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approved the Forward Work Programme in Appendix A, noted that the Forward Work Programme and any updates from the Committee would be reported to the next meeting of COSC and noted the Recommendation Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B.

19. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.