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Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children – **Caerphilly County Borough Council**

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The team who delivered the work comprised Gareth Jones, managed by Non Jenkins under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Summary report

Summary

What we reviewed and why

- 1 We undertook this review to seek assurance that the Council has effective corporate arrangements in place for safeguarding children. We considered the findings of our 2014 report into the Council's arrangements to support safeguarding of children¹. We also considered the Council's progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the Auditor General's report, 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils' (July 2015)².
- 2 We undertook the review during May 2019. The Council provided a self-assessment of its progress in addressing the recommendations and proposals for improvement made in 2014 and 2015. The Council provided documents to support its self-assessment. We then interviewed key officers and the lead member for Corporate Safeguarding.
- 3 Our review has been limited to reviewing the Council's self-assessment of its progress against our previous recommendations and proposals for improvement. We have not tested the effectiveness of the Council's safeguarding arrangements in practice as part of this review.

What we found

- 4 Our review sought to answer the question: **Has the Council acted upon the recommendations and proposals for improvement contained in the national and local reports of the Auditor General published in 2014 and 2015?**
- 5 Overall we found that: **Although the Council has made some progress in addressing our previous recommendations, the Council needs to further strengthen its corporate safeguarding oversight and assurance arrangements.**
- 6 Based on the work we have done, the Council needs to further strengthen its oversight and assurance of its corporate safeguarding arrangements. In particular, the Corporate Safeguarding Board has a very extensive remit but only meets annually. The Council does not currently include Safeguarding in its corporate risk register nor service area risk registers. The Council should strengthen the oversight of the assurance provided by its Corporate Safeguarding Board to ensure that the Council's procedures for safeguarding children and adults are robust. The role of the Cabinet, Audit Committee, Internal Audit and Scrutiny in relation to Corporate Safeguarding need to be clarified.
- 7 The Council's Cabinet commitments include safeguarding as a key priority, and the

¹ Auditor General for Wales, **Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children – Caerphilly County Borough Council**, October 2014

² **Auditor General for Wales, Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils**, July 2015

Council's ethos is that 'Safeguarding is Everybody's Business.' However, it has yet to fully address a number of our previous national recommendations as shown below. **Exhibit 2** that follows sets out our assessment of the Council's progress in implementing each national recommendation and local proposal for improvement.

Exhibit 1: National recommendations that have yet to be fully addressed

The table below sets out the national recommendations that the Council has not yet fully addressed

National recommendations that have yet to be fully addressed
<p>R3 Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and compliance with safe recruitment policies cover all services that come into contact with children; • creating an integrated corporate compliance system to record and monitor compliance levels on DBS checks; and • requiring safe recruitment practices amongst partners in the third sector and for volunteers who provide services commissioned and/or used by the council which are underpinned by a contract or service level agreement.
<p>R4 Ensure all relevant staff, members and partners understand their safeguarding responsibilities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring safeguarding training is mandated and coverage extended to all relevant council service areas, and is included as standard on induction programmes; • creating a corporate-wide system to identify, track and monitor compliance on attending safeguarding training in all council departments, elected members, schools, governors and volunteers; and • requiring relevant staff in partner organisations who are commissioned to work for the council in delivering services to children and young people to undertake safeguarding training.
<p>R6 Improve accountability for corporate safeguarding by regularly reporting safeguarding issues and assurances to scrutiny committee(s) against a balanced and council-wide set of performance information covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benchmarking and comparisons with others; • conclusions of internal and external audit/inspection reviews; • service-based performance data; • key personnel data such as safeguarding training, and DBS recruitment checks; and • the performance of contractors and commissioned services on compliance with council safeguarding responsibilities.
<p>R7 Establish a rolling programme of internal audit reviews to undertake systems testing and compliance reviews on the council's safeguarding practices.</p>
<p>R8 Ensure the risks associated with safeguarding are considered at both a corporate and service level in developing and agreeing risk management plans across the council.</p>

Exhibit 2: assessment of the Council's progress in addressing the national recommendations

The table below sets out our assessment of the Council's progress in addressing the national recommendations and local proposals for improvement.

Recommendation from the 2015 report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress
<p>R1 Improve corporate leadership and comply with Welsh Government policy on safeguarding through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the appointment of a senior lead officer who is accountable for safeguarding and protecting children and young people with corporate responsibilities for planning improvements; 2. the appointment of a lead member for safeguarding; and 3. regularly disseminating and updating information on these appointments to all staff and stakeholders. 	<p>Summary – Fully met</p> <p>The Council has improved corporate leadership and compliance with Welsh Government policy on safeguarding through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. appointing a senior lead officer (Director of Social Services and Housing) who is accountable for safeguarding and protecting children and young people with corporate responsibilities for planning improvements; 2. appointing a lead member for safeguarding (Cabinet Member for Social Services & Housing); and 3. regularly disseminating and updating information on these appointments to all staff and stakeholders. <p>The Council could consider the following options to further strengthen its arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that the Corporate Safeguarding Policy is more easily accessible from the main Council Intranet page and not solely through the Children's Services pages; • ensuring that Designated Safeguarding Officers' contact details are displayed prominently on service area intranet pages; • ensuring visibility of key officers and the lead member on intranet pages and in training materials; and • collecting ongoing data about staff and stakeholders' awareness of the key Corporate Safeguarding roles.

Recommendation from the 2015 report

Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress

Local Proposal for Improvement 2

The Council should clarify who designated officers with responsibility for safeguarding are.

Summary – Fully Met

The Council has clarified who the designated officers with responsibility for safeguarding are and this is outlined in the policy clearly as shown below:

The Chief Executive

4.1 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring arrangements for safeguarding of children and adults are effective across the Council. The Chief Executive is responsible for developing effective governance arrangements and ensuring there is an effective safeguarding policy in place.

4.2 Through one to one meetings with the Corporate Director of Social Services, the Chief Executive is kept informed of relevant safeguarding issues.

4.3 In addition, any exceptional matters relating to safeguarding could be reported to the G7 meeting by the Chief Executive. The G7 is a strategic meeting of the Chief Executives of the five Gwent Local Authorities, the Police and the Health Board.

Lead Member for Safeguarding (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Wellbeing)

4.4 The Lead Member for Safeguarding is responsible for providing political scrutiny to ensure the Council fulfils its duties and responsibilities for safeguarding. The Lead Member will chair the Corporate Safeguarding Board and support Elected Members to scrutinise and appropriately challenge the safeguarding performance of the Council.

4.5 The Lead Member will be briefed on any sensitive cases that may be considered for Child or Adult Practice Reviews or may otherwise become a matter of public interest. The Lead Member will periodically visit front line services to meet with staff and managers

Statutory Director of Social Services

4.9 The Statutory Director of Social Services has final and ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Council has appropriate safeguarding measures in place to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Statutory Director is responsible for reporting the effectiveness of these arrangements on a corporate level to the Chief Executive, Corporate Management Team and to Elected Members.

Recommendation from the 2015 report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress
	<p>4.10 The Statutory Director is the point of contact for all other Corporate Directors to report serious safeguarding concerns which may occur in their own service areas. The Statutory Director is responsible for ensuring appropriate action is taken including reporting to the Chief Executive and the Lead Cabinet Member as necessary.</p> <p>4.11 The Director delegates the lead responsibility for operational and strategic safeguarding to the Assistant Directors for Adult Services and Children's Services. The Assistant Directors ensure the Director is kept informed of safeguarding issues through one to one meetings and as the need may arise outside these meetings.</p> <p>4.12 The Director is responsible for providing an Annual Report to the Council and CSSIW on the progress and performance of Social Services which includes the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.</p>
<p>R2 Ensure there is a corporate-wide policy on safeguarding covering all council services to provide a clear strategic direction and clear lines of accountability across the council.</p>	<p>Summary – Fully Met</p> <p>The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy states that 'Safeguarding is Everybody's Business' and it covers;</p> <p>'all Council and education employees, Elected Members, Volunteers and contractors. While employees, Elected Members, volunteers and contractors are likely to have varied level of contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults as part of their duties, everyone should be aware of the potential indicators of abuse and neglect and be clear about what to do if they have concerns.'</p> <p>Safeguarding is also a key priority within the Cabinet's commitments.</p> <p>The Council's policy was last updated in 2018 and reflects a range of Safeguarding related topics including modern day slavery, child sexual exploitation, counter terrorism and the risk of radicalisation, Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and these topics are covered in the training materials.</p> <p>The Council has recently introduced a self-assessment toolkit for all service areas to complete around safeguarding which reinforces the responsibilities of all service areas.</p> <p>Designated Safeguarding Officers are in all public facing service areas to help with distributed leadership on Safeguarding. These officers provide a lead on Safeguarding within their service areas.</p>

Recommendation from the 2015 report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress
	<p>The Council could consider the following options to further strengthen its arrangement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • revising its policy statement to enable the existing Designated Safeguarding Officers to be a council wide resource and not only appointed for deployment in specific service areas where there is direct contact with the public. This would better promote the Council's ethos that safeguarding is 'Everybody's Business'. • revising its Corporate Safeguarding Policy to ensure that the role of Internal Audit, Audit Committee, Scrutiny and Cabinet are clarified.
<p>Local Proposal for Improvement 1 Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.</p>	<p>See narrative above</p>
<p>R3 Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ensuring that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and compliance with safe recruitment policies cover all services that come into contact with children; 2. creating an integrated corporate compliance system to record and monitor compliance levels on DBS checks; and 3. requiring safe recruitment practices amongst partners in the third sector and for volunteers who provide services commissioned and/or used by the council which are 	<p>Summary – Partially met</p> <p>The Council has acted to ensure that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and compliance with safe recruitment policies cover all services that come into contact with children. It has created an integrated corporate compliance system to record and monitor compliance levels on DBS checks for staff.</p> <p>The Council has developed a useful draft Safer Recruitment policy that better reflects the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and should ensure that when recruiting staff and volunteers the Council is ensuring that safe recruitment is embedded consistently.</p> <p>The Council's Human Resources team has reviewed all posts and considered the level of DBS check required for all posts across all service areas and the HR team monitor any proposed changes to those agreed checks, for example, when post holders change.</p> <p>The Council sets out in its contractual agreements that commissioned services are required to undertake safe recruitment practices .</p>

Recommendation from the 2015 report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress
<p>underpinned by a contract or service level agreement.</p>	<p>However, at the time of our fieldwork we found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is not a council wide approach to monitoring the compliance of contractors with safe recruitment practices. Monitoring arrangements are set within service areas. The Council's safer recruitment policy was yet to be finalised, agreed and applied. • although the Council has developed an integrated system to oversee DBS checks and safer recruitment checks for employees it has yet to establish a central system to oversee those checks for volunteers and contractors. <p>As such, the Council has further work to do to fully address this national recommendation. In doing so, the Council should also look to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that its monitoring systems enable tracking of safe recruitment for volunteers and contractors as well as staff; • strengthen its arrangements for monitoring that services commissioned by the Council undertake safe recruitment practices; and • ensure that all managers undertake training on the revised safe recruitment process and highlighting the need to ensure safe recruitment of volunteers and contractors.
<p>R4</p> <p>Ensure all relevant staff, members and partners understand their safeguarding responsibilities by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ensuring safeguarding training is mandated and coverage extended to all relevant council service areas, and is included as standard on induction programmes; 2. creating a corporate-wide system to identify, track and monitor compliance on attending safeguarding training 	<p>Summary – Partially Met</p> <p>The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy places a responsibility on Corporate Directors to ensure that staff within their Directorates are appropriately trained to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns. The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy is provided in hard copy to all newly appointed staff and those staff must sign to confirm receipt of the policy.</p> <p>Although safeguarding training is not mandated for elected Members, the Council has taken proactive steps to ensure that Members receive basic safeguarding training. The Council has arrangements to ensure that those Members who are unable to attend those sessions are made aware of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding policy and training materials.</p>

Recommendation from the 2015 report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress
<p>3. in all council departments, elected members, schools, governors and volunteers; and requiring relevant staff in partner organisations who are commissioned to work for the council in delivering services to children and young people to undertake safeguarding training</p>	<p>However,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council does not currently mandate safeguarding training to staff in all relevant services areas. As a result, the Council's Designated Safeguarding Officers group has developed a revised training framework with training appropriate to the level of contact staff have with children. This new framework will be implemented by the end of 2019. • Designated Safeguarding Officers currently deliver training in their service areas. Whilst this approach ensures that all staff, including those who do not have regular access to a computer, receive training, the Council has recognised that the recording of this training information has been inconsistent to date and is now acting to address this. • The Council's Safeguarding policy is less clear on the requirement to ensure that relevant staff in partner organisations who are commissioned/contracted to work on behalf of the Council in delivering services to children and young people should undertake safeguarding training. <p>As such, the Council has further work to do to fully address this national recommendation.</p> <p>In doing so, the Council should also look to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that staff training is recorded consistently to enable refresher training to be undertaken in a timely fashion; • agree a minimum timescale within which staff, volunteers and contractors undertake basic initial training upon appointment; • ensure that its monitoring systems enable tracking of training for volunteers and contractors as well as staff; • report the take up of initial and refresher training in the revised training framework to the Corporate Safeguarding Board; • collate a percentage breakdown of safeguarding training (initial and refresher) compliance for staff in each service area and for volunteers and contractors; • explore the use of e-learning as part of its training framework; and • clarify how safeguarding training for contractors will be monitored.

Recommendation from the 2015 report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress
<p>Local Proposal for Improvement 4 Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding. This should also include volunteers.</p>	<p>See narrative above</p>
<p>R6 Improve accountability for corporate safeguarding by regularly reporting safeguarding issues and assurances to scrutiny committee(s) against a balanced and council-wide set of performance information covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benchmarking and comparisons with others; • conclusions of internal and external audit/inspection reviews; • service-based performance data; • key personnel data such as safeguarding training, and DBS recruitment checks; and • the performance of contractors and commissioned services on compliance with council safeguarding responsibilities 	<p>Summary – Partially Met</p> <p>The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy sets out that the Cabinet has delegated responsibility 'for monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across the Council' and the production of the Annual Corporate Safeguarding report to the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Board.</p> <p>The Corporate Safeguarding Board has a clear and comprehensive remit as set out in the Corporate Safeguarding Policy. The Board's terms of reference can be found in Appendix 1.</p> <p>A key aspect of the Board's responsibilities is to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across the Council and to act strategically to assure the Council that procedures for managing safeguarding concerns are robust.</p> <p>The Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report is published on the elected Members' Portal for information and can be 'called in' to scrutiny by any elected Member</p> <p>The Council has recently introduced a self-assessment process for Designated Safeguarding Officers to complete in their service areas. Those self assessments will not be returned until after the 2019 annual meeting of the Corporate Safeguarding Board. The Council acknowledges that it could use the Red, Amber, Green ratings provided in the self assessments to inform the 2019-20 Annual Corporate Safeguarding report as well as improvement actions across the Council during 2019-20.</p> <p>However,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is unclear how the Corporate Safeguarding Board discharges its full oversight and assurance remit given that it meets once a year to receive a draft of and agree the Annual Corporate Safeguarding report.

Recommendation from the 2015 report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Annual Safeguarding Board's report has not been called into scrutiny to date and neither Cabinet nor Audit Committee receive a report in relation to the effectiveness of Corporate Safeguarding arrangements. • the Corporate Safeguarding Board's report does not currently provide sufficient assurance to the Council that its procedures for managing safeguarding concerns are robust. The 2018 report focussed mainly on operational issues rather than the strategic overview that the Board is responsible for. • the data due to be reported in the Board's 2018-19 Annual report whilst relevant to Safeguarding does not reflect the broader safeguarding activity undertaken by the Council and does not as previously recommended; • provide benchmarking and comparisons with other Councils; • refer to the conclusions of internal and external audit / inspection reviews; • provide service-based performance data; • provide clear data on safeguarding training undertaken and also safe recruitment processes; and • outline the performance of contractors, partners and volunteers on compliance with council safeguarding responsibilities. <p>As such, the Council has further work to do to fully address this national recommendation to assure itself that it has robust oversight and assurance of the effectiveness of its safeguarding arrangements.</p> <p>In doing so, the Council should also look to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the Corporate Safeguarding Board is supported to discharge its responsibilities effectively; • ensure effective oversight of the annual Corporate Safeguarding report to provide assurance; and • develop a wider set of performance measures as previously recommended to reflect the Corporate Safeguarding Policy's intentions and provide greater assurance around the operation of the policy.
<p>Local Proposal for Improvement 3 Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to members to provide adequate assurance that corporate arrangements are working effectively.</p>	<p>See narrative above</p>

Recommendation from the 2015 report

Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress

R7
Establish a rolling programme of internal audit reviews to undertake systems testing and compliance reviews on the council's safeguarding practices.

Summary – Partially met
The Council has established a programme of regular safeguarding audits across schools which are undertaken on a three yearly cycle and those provide insight and assurance around safeguarding in schools. Summary reports are then provided to senior leaders on the outcomes of those audits.

Internal Audit consider that safeguarding considerations are embedded in each of their audits.

However,

- Apart from its approach to safeguarding audits in schools, the Council has not clearly established a rolling programme of internal audit reviews to test systems and compliance with the Council's Corporate safeguarding policy.
- we did not find evidence of a regular mechanism for Internal Audit to share Safeguarding related issues with lead Corporate Safeguarding officers or to inform the Annual Corporate Safeguarding report, or the Audit Committee that governance arrangements for safeguarding are robust.
- whilst the Council's annual governance statement process requires heads of service to provide assurance around staff being aware and receiving training around Corporate Safeguarding, this assurance only focusses on staff and does not provide assurance relating to volunteers and contractors so does not fully reflect the scope of the Council's own Corporate Safeguarding policy.

As such, the Council has further work to do to fully address this national recommendation.

In doing so, the Council should also look to:

- clarify the role of Internal Audit and Audit Committee in relation to assuring the effective operation and governance of Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, including within the Corporate Safeguarding Policy;
- ensure that relevant information and insight from Internal Audit's programme of work is shared and feeds into the Council's oversight and assurance framework for safeguarding including with the Corporate Safeguarding Board; and
- provide safeguarding training and refresher training to Internal Audit Staff.

Recommendation from the 2015 report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Council's progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Proposal for Improvement 5 Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding. 	<p>Partially met (see above narrative)</p>
<p>R8 Ensure the risks associated with safeguarding are considered at both a corporate and service level in developing and agreeing risk management plans across the council.</p>	<p>Summary – Not met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council does not include safeguarding as one of its Corporate Risks and it is not part of Children's Services risk register. • The Council has not provided clear evidence of safeguarding risks being considered at a either corporate and service level. In part, the Council considers that in Social Services and Education safeguarding is viewed as being embedded within the service areas' activities. However, evidence provided shows that there is limited contract monitoring that focusses on safeguarding aspects. • The Council's recently introduced self-assessment tool may provide some insight into risks that exist across service areas, but the Council has not yet articulated how it will use that evidence to develop its approach to safeguarding risks. <p>The Council has therefore not made progress in addressing this national recommendation.</p>

Appendix 1

Corporate Safeguarding Board

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The responsibility for maintaining an overview of safeguarding arrangements across the Council has been delegated to the Corporate Safeguarding Board by Cabinet.

The Main responsibilities of the Board are to ensure that robust arrangements for safeguarding children and adults are in place within and across the Council.

Membership of the Board:

- Lead Member for Corporate Safeguarding (Chair)
- The Designated Safeguarding Officers from each Service area
- Assistant Director – Children’s Services
- Education Safeguarding Lead
- Service Manager – Safeguarding, Social Services
- Workforce Development Manager
- Legal Services
- Other Officers will be co-opted as required and agreed by the Group

Key responsibilities of the Board will be to:

- Assure Cabinet that the Council’s procedures for safeguarding children and adults are robust.
- Ensure cross Directorate / interdepartmental working and corporate communication in relation to safeguarding is effective.
- Support the functions and duties of the Statutory Director for Social Services.
- Approve policies and guidelines for safeguarding for each Service area of the council and receive information about their respective performance management arrangements in relation to their safeguarding responsibilities to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensure the Designated Safeguarding Officers are supported to collaborate and share information and to identify any gaps in the Council’s safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Identify and resolve any barriers that could prevent the implementation of effective safeguarding procedures.

- Identify any gaps in Corporate policies and guidelines and ensure they are addressed.
- Ensure effective working relationships are maintained with the Regional Safeguarding Boards (Children's and Adults) and the Business Unit.
- Ensure appropriate training is available for Officers and Elected Members.
- Receive and consider corporate safeguarding performance information and identify any actions required.
- Receive and consider information about trends in relation to allegations of professional abuse and adopt action plans to respond to any issues should the need arise.
- Consider the implications of any Child or Adult Practice Review or Domestic Homicide Review and ensure that the Council responds effectively to recommendations as they may apply to the Council.
- Periodically review and update the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the content of the Intranet Portal.
- Produce an Annual Report.

Meeting conduct:

- The meetings will be held annually.
- The meetings will be chaired by the Lead Member for Corporate Safeguarding.
- The meetings will be administered by Children's Services Business Support.
- All members are able to submit items for consideration.
- Agenda, minutes and relevant papers will be circulated ahead of the meetings.
- Membership and Terms of Reference for the Board will be reviewed annual/or as required.

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