



# Swansea Council Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2023/24



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## **1. Foreword by Cabinet Member and Director of Social Services**

### **1.1 Introduction by Cabinet Member for Care Services, Cllr Louise Gibbard**

Corporate Safeguarding is rightly established as part of how we work as a Council on behalf of Swansea citizens. Our corporate policy is shaping practice across all Council Directorates and Services to improve how we protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of our most vulnerable children and adults, so that they can live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

I am pleased to present this report to Scrutiny Programme Committee, as we prepare for National Safeguarding week. It is a good opportunity to take time to reflect on how we are working together to achieve our aims.

As a Council, we can be proud not only of our ambition, and efforts in taking forward a strategic, whole system approach to safeguarding our most vulnerable children and adults. I really value the opportunity to support the Corporate Safeguarding group, and the leads in such vital developments. We can be proud of our workforce and the journey we are taking, as reflected in this annual report. There are so many positive examples of how we are continually striving to improve, and ensure support is available to our most vulnerable citizens, families and communities.

### **1.2 Introduction by Director of Social Services, David Howes**

Swansea is showing ambition on Corporate Safeguarding, and the aspirations, reflected in the corporate priority to ensure that the whole Council plays a part in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children and adults who may be at risk of harm.

This annual report describes both Swansea Council's approach to corporate safeguarding, summarises the governance arrangements we have in place and more importantly reflects on a journey that continues, one that ensures that all Directorates, not just Social Services, all employees and people carrying our work on behalf of the Council are switched on to keeping vulnerable children and adults safe in our communities.

Our local health, care and welfare services are all faced with rising demand, and with increasingly complex needs of children, families, adults and carers. These needs reflect society pressures, people's lived experience, and what is happening day to day in our communities. By working with people, respecting their rights and views as citizens, we can better understand their needs and work more closely in partnership to prioritise and help keep people safe and well.

I am pleased with how we are responding to these challenges as a Council, and in our work with colleagues in Health, the Police, Fire Service and with Third Sector, through West Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding Board are working towards prevention and getting it right first time.

I wish to acknowledge the work of Cabinet Member for Care Services, Cllr. Louise Gibbard in championing safeguarding and human rights and the importance of listening to the voice of each child and citizen in the course of our work.

Through the efforts and dedication of our staff, particularly the named safeguarding persons and leads, we are continuing to strengthen the governance and corporate

arrangements outlined in this report, and we can be confident that this approach is working.

## **2. Swansea Council's approach to Corporate Safeguarding**

2.1 This Annual Report Corporate Safeguarding sets out Swansea Council's progress on implementing the Council's policy, and the arrangements it has in place, to ensure that all Directorates, employees, services and people working on behalf of the Council play their part in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children and adults who may be at risk of harm.

2.2 Swansea Council's corporate safeguarding policy has been updated to give greater focus on prevention work, and to extend the duty to report to all public service officers. Our policy aims to make sure our focus is on the full extent of potential, contextual safeguarding risks and concerns posed to vulnerable people, such as child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, radicalisation, etc. [Corporate Safeguarding Policy - Swansea](#)

2.3 Reflected in Swansea's corporate safeguarding policy are the key elements needed to ensure Corporate Safeguarding is effective:

- Safe governance & performance
- Safe employment
- Safe workforce
- Safe practice
- Safe voice
- Safe partnerships

2.4 Safeguarding as Everyone's Business - Our corporate safeguarding policy and Corporate Plan strategic priority continues to promote "a "Safeguarding as everyone's business" approach, and this applies to:

- our employees
- elected members
- volunteers
- contractors (specific conditions may also apply within contracts)

Only by working together as a whole Council, we can ensure that all our activities and services are carried out by elected representatives, paid staff, partners, volunteers and providers who are all fully up to date and aware of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities to help protect our most vulnerable citizens.

2.5 This annual report has a particular focus on providing reassurance about how these arrangements are being strengthened by the work programme undertaken on behalf of the Corporate Safeguarding group.

### 3. Safe Governance and Performance

- 3.1.1 As a council, we are confident that we have a set of robust arrangements for responding to, and managing safeguarding concerns. By having arrangements, this does not automatically mean a culture of safeguarding exists; by ensuring that we are working across the whole organisation, within partnerships, and that we continue to improve. In Swansea, we demonstrate safe governance by having a clear policy framework, effective structures, lead roles across the whole council and most of all by taking action as and when needed.
- 3.1.2 **Corporate Leadership** – We must ensure strong, effective corporate leadership is in place to ensure that all staff know, understand and can apply what they know about safeguarding in all circumstances. Swansea Council continues to promote an effective ‘everyone’s business’ safeguarding culture requires strong, leadership commitment and presence. This is reflected with the latest Corporate Plan 2023-28, and in within the Annual Review of Performance against the corporate priority ‘Safeguarding our most vulnerable citizens’.
- 3.1.3 **Corporate Safeguarding Group** – regular council-wide leadership meeting is jointly chaired by the Director of Social Services, David Howes, and the Cabinet Member for Care Services, Cllr. Louise Gibbard, who is the corporate safeguarding champion.
- 3.1.4 **Corporate Safeguarding Operational group** - the regular meetings, chaired by the Principal Officer for Safeguarding, Performance & Transformation have the support of the strategic group to renew the focus of meetings, update the terms of reference, group membership and to propose a updated work programme.
- 3.1.5 **Named Safeguarding Leads** - Published List of all named safeguarding officers are working effectively together under the direction of a Corporate Safeguarding Operational group, which implements an agreed work programme. [Named safeguarding persons - Staff portal](#)
- 3.1.6 **Communication**- the operational group is working web pages have been reviewed and updated to reflect the full range of work undertaken.  
<https://staffnet.swansea.gov.uk/safeguardinginfo>
- 3.2. **Safe Performance** -the aim of this work area is to maintain a corporate performance framework to support the safeguarding corporate priority and to ensure there is a ‘golden thread’ linking this strategic objective to the work of each Council employee. Also supporting policy development continuous improvement activities and work programme in relation to Corporate Safeguarding. There are agreed success measures linked to the corporate priority on safeguarding reported in quarterly and annually. via the Council’s InPhase system.

3.2.1 **Reporting** – self- assessment audit tool (Section 135) is still used to review deployment, and to analyse compliance against the standards expected within Safeguarding Policy by all Directorate Management Teams. The self-assessment is completed by Leads in each service area. A summary report is prepared and presented to the Regional Board on an exceptions basis. The report also helps to identify improvements needed for safeguarding for children, young people and adults at risk in the year ahead.

- No. of completed Self Assessments in 2023 = **15** (16).

3.2.2 **Internal Audit** – the Internal Audit review of Corporate Safeguarding 2022/23 was reported in the last annual report, the two items for follow up were:

– All council areas now have representation on the group (2.3.4)

– Oracle Fusion had not yet gone live, to be reviewed once system is working (2.3.5)

These items have been by the Internal Audit team and now considered as complete.

#### **4. Four Priority Areas**

4.1 **Safe Practice** - Swansea Council expects that vulnerable people in Swansea are kept safe and protected from abuse and neglect. To best achieve this, safeguarding vulnerable adults and children is seen as “everybody’s business” Safeguarding practice has to be delivered timely and effectively, to expected standards and with consistency in practice.

##### **4.1.1 Safeguarding Children**

Making sure that children are safe and protected is everyone's responsibility.

Corporate Safeguarding is concerned about the arrangements we have in place so that we are all clear about our individual and collective responsibilities to the child at risk of harm or abuse. In particular the *'duty to report'* any concerns we may have in relation to possible abuse to the right person at the right time. There is up to date national guidance on the expectations around safeguarding children.

National Guidance: <https://www.safeguarding.wales/en/chi-i/>

Local Public guidance pages: [Safeguarding children - Swansea](#)

Staff Pages: [Child protection - concerned about possible abuse? - Swansea Council Staff portal](#)

4.1.2 **Weekly safeguarding meetings** - the purpose of the Weekly Safeguarding Meeting is to review Section 47 Assessments occurring in the 15 days before the meeting to reflect on decision making and threshold. In addition to this we will reflect on the process and identify learning that we can take forward to develop our work with families and partner agencies. Furthermore, this will support us to move towards the development of a shared and consistent threshold for everyone.

4.1.3 **Peer Review** - Teams within Child & Family also have regular peer reviews and reflective Supervisions to discuss individual cases as a group. These are facilitated by the principal Social Worker for Practice

4.1.4 **Learning culture** - Within the Service Quality Unit (SQU) Independent Reviewing Officers and Child protection chairs have oversight of all looked after children and those on the Child Protection register. Each case is monitored to ensure any decisions and actions are in the best interests of the child. Learning is taken forward from any updates, service issues, the complaints process, series case reviews and we continue to draw on the support from the Learning and Innovation Team to develop practice across Child and Family services.

4.1.5 **Multi Agency working** – there is a broad consensus on the benefits of multi-agency collaborative approaches in safeguarding hubs. Research and development work is underway nationally and regionally shaping the future of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Wales: National Evaluation of Multi-Agency Operational Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales – Phase 1 - Safeguarding Board Wales

4.1.5 **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Human Rights, Rights of Child and Trauma Informed Practice**

Work is on-going to consider how we, as a whole Council, are supporting a human and children's rights-based approach to preventing and supporting people with ACEs. We also recognise that, for many services, ACEs is not something new and that there is already good practice and key building blocks in place. We continue to build on this good practice, to strengthen our ambitions to create an ACE-informed, trauma-informed, trauma-responsive Council to drive transformational change.

4.2 **Safe Employment** - the Council has safe recruitment and employment standards, implemented in accordance with National and Regional Safeguarding Children and Adult Safeguarding board guidance, and set out in Local Authority recruitment and selection policy, procedures and local guidance.

4.2.1 **Policy Work** -the Council's recruitment and selection policy is currently under review, safeguarding has been highlighted as a feature of the new policy.

4.2.2 **DBS Policy and Compliance** - a new DBS Policy was implemented in August 2023, and development work is currently ongoing with schools to ensure it is adopted at school level.

4.2.3 **DBS work with school Governors-** a significant piece of work is leading to a considerable reduction in DBS breaches, and the intention is for this is to become fully compliant with zero breaches. Officers continue to engage with schools where

breaches do occur to rectify, and also to understand why they have occurred and how they can be prevented in the future. Work undertaken includes

- Each Chair of School Governors advised of their responsibility/accountability at Spring term meeting with Director, and this messaging was repeated in the Spring term Governors newsletter (2023-Safeguarding Governor focus) and they continue to be advised of this responsibility.
- Similar communications placed in Education Department newsletter – HT and Business Manager audience
- HR Officers attended Admin Forum for messages to be issued stressed within business support roles
- A monthly report from the service centre is now placed on agenda for monthly School Issues & Risks and now a standing item each month/
- HR are able to target schools of concern prior to GAC moderate report meeting to focus on the additional support needed.
- Arrangement in place to escalate concerns for response e.g. DBS was taken by clerk to Governing Body Forums in April & May.
- The new HROD DBS Policy has been distributed to governors, discussion currently ongoing with regards to ensuring schools fully adopt the policy.

**4.3 Safe Workforce-** all staff employed by Swansea Council, including new staff are expected to have an awareness and understanding of their own corporate safeguarding role, as a Council employee, and as a citizen.

**4.3.1 National Safeguarding Training Framework** – Swansea’s safeguarding training is fully in line with the National Safeguarding Training, Learning and Development Framework. Swansea training officers have played prominent roles, alongside staff from Neath Port Talbot training department, in the development and roll out of the West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board ‘Group B Safeguarding Children and Adult’s’ 1 day training. Currently, Swansea is the only Welsh Local Authority to be able to offer a ‘full package’ rolling programme of free multi-agency safeguarding training to our staff and staff working in our partner agencies. Swansea’s safeguarding trainings have received wide praise and recognition, including from Social Care Wales (SCW) for their relevance, content and delivery style.

**4.3.2 Mandatory Training** - Swansea offers a Group A safeguarding e-learning, which mandatory for all staff who have access to a computer and a Swansea.gov.uk email address. This E-learning is also available to external users (including personal assistants and volunteers. For service provision staff who do not have access to a computer/email address, the training department offer a monthly rolling program of half day face to face training. The face-to-face training additionally covers the key expectations of staff under Group 1 of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence National Training Framework.

**4.3.3 Training Offer** – Swansea Staff Development and Training Team currently offer free, high quality 1-day multi-agency Child Protection/Safeguarding trainings for Group B, C and D and the equivalent 1-day multi-agency Adult Protection trainings for Group B, C and D. There is a rolling safeguarding training programme in place offering blended



approach with both face to face and virtual training (over Teams) on offer. Bespoke face-to-face sessions at Group B have been offered to colleagues across the domiciliary and service provision areas of Adult Services.

4.3.4 **Train the Trainer** - For other service areas, the training department offers a Train the Trainer Day that is specifically for safeguarding leads/managers from service areas across the council. Our Train the Trainer pack provides a full set of delivery materials and resources for safeguarding leads/managers to themselves deliver the half day face to face Group A/Group 1 safeguarding training for staff in their sectors.

4.3.5 **Induction**- the Council induction programme is mandatory for new starters, and now available as an e-Learning module, setting out the expectations, roles and responsibilities within corporate safeguarding and our 'duty to report' concerns.

4.3.6 **Multi Agency Offer** - As a result of our success in terms of providing high quality and up to date safeguarding trainings, Swansea training department is regularly commissioned to provide safeguarding training to organisations including Royal College of General Practitioners, Mid and South Wales Fire Service and Childminder and Nursery settings. Demand for places on our free multi-agency safeguarding training has increased significantly over the last 3 years. Planned training dates quickly become oversubscribed soon after they have been advertised and we frequently receive requests for additional training to be provided.

#### 4.3.7 **Staff /Elected Member Take up**

Since learning has been included on Oracle Fusion in April 2023, the totals for both mandatory E-Learning courses completed are:

- Mandatory-EL-CT-**Group A** Safeguarding - Everybody's Responsibility = **3427**
- Mandatory EL-CT-Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence = **2588**

**All** Councillors have completed the EL-CT-Group A Safeguarding - Everybody's Responsibility

**12 elected members** have formally completed the EL-CT-Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence VAWDASV since April 2023.

4.3.8 **Compliance across service areas** - current reporting from Oracle can show the number of Council employees who have completed the mandatory e-Learning courses within each department/ service area. Managers are still expected to monitor their compliance within their own areas of responsibility and link to staff appraisal/ records.

4.3.9 **Staff well-being** - the personal health, safety and wellbeing of staff is paramount, and whether attending the course or engaging in safeguarding concerns the emotional

impact of the information being delivered is monitored, as far as possible, by managers and trainers.

**4.4 Safe Voice** -Swansea is aiming to ensure individuals have a “safe voice” on safeguarding matters by providing stronger voice, meaningful control over the support they receive and remove any barriers to achieving their wellbeing outcomes.

4.4.1 **‘Collaborative Communication’** the training framework for all our staff across social services to ensure that we work in a strength-based way with our citizens, this ensures that voice, choice and control is integral to all our contact with the public and those who use our service. This approach is also applied when receiving safeguarding referrals or concerns from cooperate employees and are cooperate safeguarding leads.

"The collaborative communication model is embedded in the ethos of the local authority, empowering practitioners to support individuals in identifying and building on their own strengths and networks. This strengths-based model is well-understood and effectively translated, from strategic planning and training, into practice, as confirmed by the review of social care records, staff interviews and surveys, and discussions with people. This is positive practice". Taken from (p7): [Performance Evaluation Inspection \(PEI\) report: Swansea Council adult services | Care Inspectorate Wales](#)

4.4.2 **Co-production** - we work co-productively within communities and alongside individuals and families to keep people safe from harm, supporting people to exercise voice, choice and control in their lives. Recent inspection reports have praised evidence of this strength-based approach across adult services, including our work in Adult Safeguarding:

4.4.3 **Adult Safeguarding Hub** - Adult Services Safeguarding Hib cover a range of safeguarding issues across the whole of Swansea. They manage Public Protection Notices, Adult at Risk Reports, Professional Concerns Referrals and Rapid Response Meetings. In addition to this the Team provide representation at multi-agency safeguarding meetings such as MARAC and MAPPA. The Team supports a range of professionals and provides advice, assistance and guidance, with regard to any adult safeguarding issue.

4.4.4 **Consultations** – Safeguarding consultations with safeguarding practitioners with experience and expertise. By ensuring a timely response from practitioners with specialised knowledge on legal compliance, safety planning, we are promoting an early intervention and prevention of possible further harm. Updated practice guidance and procedures are improving decision making during an adult safeguarding consultation; to ensure safety, accountability, while fostering trust and compliance with regulations and standards. The Adult Service Safeguarding Hub is utilising the ethos of collaborative communication. [Adult Services Safeguarding Update - Staff portal](#)

4.4.5 **Suicide prevention** - Suicide Rapid Response Meetings are now embedded in the Safeguarding Teams process and procedures. Ensuring the right support to those

impacted by suicide offers emotional support, reduces feelings of isolation and helps individuals grieve. Timely intervention can prevent further trauma, promote healing. When people, particularly those that are vulnerable, hear or witness suicide, they may be more likely to consider or attempt it themselves. This highlights the importance of these meetings, recognising the need for specialist support systems to be accessed and therefore reducing the risk of further harm to others occurring. [AS- Safeguarding Success - Staff portal](#)

- 4.4.6 **Focus on Prevention and Wellbeing** - focusing on the well-being is something that we do particularly well in the Safeguarding Team. This boosts morale, productivity and collaboration. It reduces burnout, stress and absenteeism; creating a healthier work environment, that is happy and positive. Prioritising well-being fosters loyalty, engagement and creativity in our work, leading to better problem solving collaboratively. Ultimately it enhances job satisfaction and retention while promoting a culture within the team that is supportive which benefits not only the Team but also the citizens that we work with and partner agencies.
- 4.4.7 **Collaborative working with partner agencies-** Forging excellent working relationships with partner agencies such as Health, Children's Services and the Police ensures effective communication, resource sharing and a co-ordinated response to safeguarding matters. It enhances problem solving, speeds up decision making and promotes a unified approach to safeguarding, crisis management and community well-being. We pride ourselves on developing excellent working relationships and are confident that we approach safeguarding matters collaboratively.
- 4.4.8 **CiW feedback-** following the recent Inspection of Adult Services), CIW reported that: "The local authority has developed a trusted approach to safeguarding through the provision of a specialised safeguarding hub, safeguarding consultations, and a newly formed Mental Capacity Team. These mechanisms support knowledge sharing, reflection on risk, and informed decision-making that empowers professionals and the adults involved" (p12, see above link to CiW Report).
- 5. **Safe Partnership** - only by working together with citizens, and other agencies, can we support children, their parents, carers and vulnerable adults to achieve the best possible outcomes. Collaboration and multi-agency working is vital in promoting child, young person, adult and older adult safety and well-being.
- 5.1 **Safe Procurement** - any Supplier engaged by the Council to undertake services on its behalf will work on the basis of an agreed contract based on the Council's terms and conditions. The need for safeguarding awareness and understanding, which relates to children and adults, will be contained in all contracts and included in any arrangements that fit the circumstances, this ensures that the Supplier makes appropriate and proportionate provision of the protection of vulnerable adults and children - Commercial Services works across the Council to ensure that the circa £400m of spend p.a. is undertaken in line with this commitment on the basis of its established 'guidance and

evaluation procedures' for safeguarding provisions and is constantly monitoring this area for compliance and works in partnership with Audit in this regard. [Safeguarding procurement - Staff portal](#)

- 5.2 **Regional Safeguarding Board-** Swansea Council is working within effective regional safeguarding board arrangements. The Regional Safeguarding Board publishes an annual plan setting out priority areas for the coming year. There is shared accountability for this plan across a range of partners, with a targeted focus on preventative approaches, improving quality, performance reporting and learning lessons from practice reviews.

[West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board \(wgsb.wales\)](http://wgsb.wales)

## 6. Looking Ahead in 2024/25

- 6.1 To complete the review of the Corporate Safeguarding Operational group, its role, purpose, terms of reference and membership.
- 6.2 To agree the updated work programme with the Corporate Safeguarding group
- 6.3 To continue to implement quality assurance frameworks within corporate safeguarding practice

## 7. Contact Details

Council staff are expected to first speak to their manager about any safeguarding concerns on the same day and they will contact the Named Safeguarding Person if necessary.	
<b>Adult at risk</b>	If neither your manager or Named Safeguarding Person is available, you will need to telephone the Adult Services Safeguarding Team by phone on 01792 636854 immediately or email them on: <a href="mailto:Adultsafeguardingteam@swansea.gov.uk">Adultsafeguardingteam@swansea.gov.uk</a>
<b>Child at risk</b>	Swansea Single Point of Contact (SPOC). if you have a concern that a child is at risk of harm: <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:singlepointofcontact@swansea.gov.uk">singlepointofcontact@swansea.gov.uk</a> <b>Tel. 01792 635700</b>
<b>Emergency</b>	In a real life, emergency situation where an adult or child may be at immediate risk of harm <b>please contact 999.</b>
<b>Emergency duty/ out of hours</b>	Our Emergency Duty Team is available outside normal working hours: <b>Tel. 01792 775501</b>