



Joint Report of the Cabinet Member for Care Services and Director of Social Services

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 November 2023

Annual Report – Corporate Safeguarding 2022-23

Purpose: This is the latest annual report on the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements. This report summarises the work programme of the Corporate Safeguarding Group during 2022-23, and highlights improvements carried out in support of the Council's corporate safeguarding policy.

Content: The Cabinet Member for Care Services and Director of Social Services will attend to present the report, to respond to questions about the report and in follow up to the letter sent by the Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Care Services, following last year's report dated 15th November 2022

Councillors are being asked to: Consider the information provided, ask questions, and make comments and recommendations as necessary.

Lead Councillor/Member: Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services

Lead Officer: David Howes, Statutory Director of Social Services

Report Author: Simon Jones - Social Services Strategy & Performance Improvement Officer

Finance Officer: Chris Davies

Legal Officer: Debbie Smith

Access to Services Officer: Catherine Window

For Information

1. Background

- 1.1 This latest Annual Report - Corporate Safeguarding 2022/23 (attached as Appendix 1) aims to update the Scrutiny Programme Committee on the work programme to implement safeguarding across the whole Council during the past year. The Annual report was prepared by the Corporate Safeguarding Operational Group, on behalf of the Corporate Safeguarding group, jointly chaired by the Cabinet Member for Care Services and the Director of Social Services.
- 1.2 Swansea Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group was first set up in 2014 to lead on the development, implementation and monitoring of corporate safeguarding policy and practice.
- 1.3 The Annual Report focuses on the following key areas of activity:
 - Safe Governance & Performance,
 - Safe Employment,
 - Safe Workforce,
 - Safe Practice,
 - Safe Partnerships,
 - Safe Voice,
- 1.4 The attached report also identifies work for the year ahead. It is a routine report to the Scrutiny Programme Committee for awareness and comment on progress, achievements and implementation of policy.
- 1.5 At the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 15th November 2022, Cabinet Member Louise Gibbard and the Director of Social Services, David Howes presented the previous annual report, questions were raised, and a letter was sent by the Chair on behalf of the Committee in response.
- 1.6 Letter of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee, dated 4th January 2023, picked up a number of themes within the current, and previous reports:
 - Working with Contractors and Suppliers
 - Mandatory Training Compliance
 - Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
 - Advocacy
 - Work for the Year Ahead
- 1.7 Response by Cabinet Member- Care Services, dated 6th January 2023, provided with additional commentary on:
 - The revised corporate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) policy
 - Council's Internal Audit report on Corporate Safeguarding completed in September 2022 with a High Assurance rating, and this report was later forwarded to the Chair for the Committee to consider.

2. Latest Developments

The main annual report (*appended*) contains updates on the broad range of safeguarding activities undertaken within and on behalf of the Council, in support of the Corporate Plan and corporate safeguarding policy. This section outlines some of the key developments in the report covering the past year 2022-23:

2.1 Corporate Plan 2023/28

There are several major challenges facing the world, UK, Wales and Swansea. Many of these challenges are having a major impact and require the Council to work in different ways, and this uncertainty in the lives of citizens is likely to continue. Safeguarding people from harm - so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation remains a key strategic priority. The Plan details the steps we will take to meet this well-being objective.

2.2 Safeguarding as 'everyone's business'

Safeguarding our most vulnerable people is 'everyone's business' across the council, within schools, with partners, and through West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board and partnerships, we will undertake a review of post-pandemic care and support provision.

2.3 Corporate Safeguarding policy

Swansea Council's updated policy has a greater focus on prevention and duty to report placed on all public service officers. The policy aims to make sure our work covers the full extent of potential, contextual safeguarding risks and concerns posed to vulnerable people, such as child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, radicalisation, etc. Reflected in the new corporate safeguarding policy are the key elements needed to ensure safeguarding remains "everyone's business".

2.4 All Wales Safeguarding Procedures

The Welsh Government introduced a set of safeguarding guidelines for children, young people and adults in November 2019. These revised procedures standardise practice across Wales and set out the roles and responsibilities of those working with children, young people and adults at risk of harm. The Wales Safeguarding Procedures are available for everyone to view from the official website: [Safeguarding Wales](#). Also, there is a free Wales Safeguarding Procedures app available to download to your phone to refer to at any time.

2.5 Corporate Safeguarding training

The fully updated programme implemented to reflect the National safeguarding training, learning and development standards (October 2022): [National safeguarding training, learning and... | Social Care Wales](#) It is important to note that within the new, national safeguarding training framework there is now a practitioner groups hierarchy.

Group A Safeguarding awareness training is mandatory for all staff and elected members Group A covers the core safeguarding principles:

- I know what the term safeguarding means
- I know what to look out for
- I know who to report to

2.6 **Internal Audit report on Corporate Safeguarding 2022/23** - our own internal audit team has recently carried out a recent review of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding 2022/23, and their final report was published September 2022. The overall assurance given within the scope of the review is 'High'.

2.7 **Estyn review** – the findings from Estyn's Inspection report on Education in Swansea (June 2022) were referenced last time, but the report reflects well on the Council's approach to corporate safeguarding, noting strong leadership, a positive culture and collaboration between service areas.

2.8 **Corporate Safeguarding operational group** – Named Safeguarding persons from all service areas are working closely together to drive improvements in all seven key areas (Swansea Model), and reporting progress to the Corporate Safeguarding group chaired by the Cabinet Member for Care Services and Director of Social Services.

2.9 **Self-Assessment / work programme**

Swansea Council's Corporate Safeguarding group requested that the section 135 audit, now called a self-assessment, be carried out this year to provide assurances that arrangements are robust in all the Council's main service areas, and to identify any additional improvements needed. This latest self-assessment used a regional tool with a clear set of standards for corporate safeguarding, which was adapted by Safeguarding Leads to better reflect the 'Swansea model' and seven key areas as shown above. The tool was completed by **15** service areas (last year = 8).

3. Issues arising from previous year

3.1 **Work with contractors and supplier** – as the Chair's letter noted that corporate safeguarding extends to how we work with suppliers and contractors to ensure safety of vulnerable children and adults. We expect that all staff employed by suppliers and contractors carrying out work on the Council's behalf are fully aware of their broader responsibilities and duties. When required that checks are carried out, and staff are given safeguarding awareness training. We carry out a suitability questionnaire to ensure that all expectations, in relation to safeguarding, are fully understood. As the letter notes, there are different levels of conditions and monitoring, depending on the nature of services contracted.

3.2 **Mandatory Training Compliance**

New mandatory Group A safeguarding eLearning has recently been launched for all Council employees, which combines the previous eLearning's for both Children and Adults Safeguarding into one module. It also incorporates the new Social Care Wales National Safeguarding Training, Learning and Development Standards. These Standards have been introduced in Wales to help to ensure that we can all work together to safeguard people to the best of our ability and that all staff, carers and volunteers receive consistent and good quality Safeguarding People training. [New mandatory safeguarding training for staff and councillors - Staff portal \(swansea.gov.uk\)](http://www.swansea.gov.uk).

3.3 **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** - Swansea Council must ensure DBS checks are undertaken for all roles that have identified as needing one. The DBS Policy has recently been reviewed and updated and is awaiting final agreement. Alongside policy development, work is underway reviewing the procedure guide and letters for Managers/Schools. work in this area is carried out within the Council by a dedicated service centre, to assist Council managers, School Governors, Head teachers in making safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.

3.4 **Advocacy**

Swansea aims to ensure all citizens 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.

Both Child and Family and Adult Services continues to improve the Council's advocacy offer made to vulnerable children, adults and their families, who can now access Independent Professional Advocacy to help ensure that they are fully informed and engaged in decisions about their care and support and that plans are in their best interests and with regard to safety.

4. **Work Programme for year ahead**

4.1 Focus on Quality Assurance/ Safe Voice through the Corporate Safeguarding Operational group and within Child and Family Services and Adult Services.

4.2 Focus on Safe Employment, through the deployment of updated HR policies and procedures such as DBS, Recruitment & Selection and Volunteers

4.3 Focus on rolling out updated Training programme in support of Safe Workforce.

- 4.4 In addition, there is work on promoting collaborative practice at the front door, within frontline teams and across all Council services. This work contributes to 'Safe Voice' aims of placing the adult/child firmly at the centre of their concern, and engaged with decisions in their own best interests, whether directly or through advocacy.
- 4.5. The work programme across key areas (Swansea model) is focused on tackling the above (section 3: issues), as on-going challenges. The new Corporate Safeguarding operational group ensures that the work programme keeps moving forward and operates within timescales, where possible.

5. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 5.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language;
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 5.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

An Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form has been completed (**Appendix B**), with the agreed outcomes as follows:

- Summary of Impacts (Q2) Impacts are positive and low on specific groups due to the nature and purpose of the report as explained above.
- Summary of involvement (Q3) Swansea Council works closely with Swansea Bay University Health Board, Third Sector organisations, Social Care providers and the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Boards. The Councils also works co-productively on what matters most to people, how services are developed and within commissioning plans. This collaborative, co-productive approach and the involvement of others has been involved in his report.
- WFG considerations (Q4) Well-being of Future Generation forms part of the overall plan and as part of the corporate plan and Council's transformation programmes, which are working towards safe, sustainable approaches to corporate safeguarding. Health, social care and wellbeing is a significant part of the local and regional economy of Swansea, and the report focused on the range of services and other organisations which form part of this economy. A skilled, qualified public sector workforce is vital to improving wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable people. The report shows how we are looking to the future by ensuring that we are well placed to recruit, retain and better support employees in their professional development, in their duty to report on safeguarding concerns, and how we can help them be the best that they can be in their work with Swansea citizens.
- Any risks identified (Q5) The work programmes referred tot within this report is risk managed closely. Any risks identified within one or all of the Council services, are agreed, mitigated and checked as routine at service, directorate and corporate levels, for example through monthly Social Services Performance and Financial Monitoring meeting and the Corporate Safeguarding group. Risks are then escalated accordingly through to appropriate corporate and political structures. Some of the wider impacts for example those emerging during the Covid pandemic, and their associated risks have been, and will continue to be, managed through the regional partnership structures.
- Cumulative impact (Q7) There is a positive impact on the wellbeing of Swansea citizens though corporate safeguarding of our most vulnerable people, including children, and the benefits this brings to the local area, economy and workforce.

The screening exercise concluded it is not necessary to complete a full Integrated Impact Assessment on this report.

- 5.3 The annual report of corporate safeguarding sets out progress towards the Council's wellbeing objective on safeguarding people from harm, as described in the Corporate Plan 2023-28, as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and associated statutory guidance.

5.4 The Annual Report takes into account the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by outlining how Swansea Council is committed to taking forward these rights forward through the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Board, and action plan.

5.5 The Council's approach to corporate safeguarding, and practice across all functions and services, must comply with Welsh Language Standards.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications.

For Information

Background papers:

None

Appendices:

Appendix A. Annual Report – Corporate Safeguarding 2022/23

Appendix B. Integrated Impact Assessment screening