



**To/
Councillor Mark Child
Cabinet Member for Adult Social
Care & Community Health Services
BY EMAIL**

cc: Cabinet Members

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SPC/2021-22/7

24 November 2021

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member following the meeting of the Committee on 19 October 2021. It is about the Annual Report on Corporate Safeguarding.

Dear Councillor Child,

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 19 October

We are writing to you following our scrutiny session to monitor and challenge Council action in relation to Corporate Safeguarding.

We thank you and officers for attending the Committee meeting to present the Annual Report which reflected on activities during 2020/21. The Annual Report is a standing item within the Committee work plan given safeguarding is one of the Council's top priorities, so we can comment on progress, achievements, and implementation of policy. Because of disruption to the work programme, unfortunately it was not considered last year. Previous discussion was in October 2019. The issues raised during discussion then were around: data protection / confidentiality as a barrier to safeguarding; the role of councillors; safeguarding training and record keeping; and training for school governors, temporary staff and contractors.

This letter reflects on what we learnt from the information presented, questions, and discussion. It shares the views of the Committee and highlights any outstanding issues / actions for your response - main issues summarised below.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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The Committee commends the continuing efforts of the Corporate Safeguarding Group across the Council to make safeguarding everyone's business – not just a matter for Social Services and Education. We note that the Annual Report covers seven key areas of activity, described as: Safe Governance, Safe Employment, Safe Workforce, Safe Practice, Safe Partnerships, Safe Voice, all contributing to Delivering Safe Performance.

We are acutely aware of the pressures on health and social care because of COVID, which will have presented risks to safeguarding. You stated that you were proud of the way in which the Council responded to safeguarding through the pandemic, with an even sharper focus on supporting and protecting those in need. In view of current workforce pressures on both Adult Services and Child & Family Services we asked whether this was impacting on safeguarding. We were assured by the Director of Social Services that despite the extraordinarily difficult circumstances at no stage did the Council or partners lose focus and dedicated safeguarding teams have continued to provide support, and come up with solutions, to protect those in urgent need, in unsafe circumstances. He added that there is always a reactive response available which ensures the Council meets its statutory responsibilities around safeguarding, however the team is able to take a more proactive and preventative approach and head off issues where possible depending on pressures, and feedback has been positive.

We note that there is an expectation that all contractors, companies and individuals, carrying out work on behalf of the Council, to confirm that they comply with the Council's Safeguarding Policies, and this also applied to their staff or their sub-contractors. We asked whether training was provided by the Council or if not how awareness and compliance is demonstrated to the Council. We heard that this is still work in progress, with efforts impacted upon by the pandemic, however this remained on the work programme to do more. We were told that there are guidance documents for contractors which spell it out some of the things they need to be doing to evidence compliance. We noted that there would be different levels of contract monitoring, depending on the services contracted, e.g. a regulated provider would require a high level of compliance, but safeguarding nevertheless would be written into all contracts. We also asked about the work looking at improvements for ensuring DBS checks for contractors are completed in line with the new DBS Policy and Risk Assessment and noted this is also work in progress. You took the opportunity to assure us that any Council funding for community events would be subject to volunteers being DBS checked.

We were also interested in who was overseeing / monitoring whether those working in a voluntary capacity for the Council have had the appropriate level of safeguarding training and comply with policy and procedures. It was clarified that anyone employed directed by the Council, whether in paid or voluntary capacity would be expected to follow the same process in relation to safeguarding training. In the case of volunteers in the Third Sector the situation was different, and work was being undertaken to ensure we have a

high level of standard in place. In the interim the Council has been able to give access to its on-line 'learning pool' so they can access the same training as Council staff, but there is work in progress to ensure access to external providers.

We look forward to next year's Annual Report when we can follow up on these issues. We can also follow up on work you have identified within this year's report for the year ahead:

Safe Employment

- Promoting safeguarding and the duty to report as everybody's business in all recruitment materials, and job descriptions in line with the current corporate safeguarding policy.
- Continue to review / update all our staff and employment policies including a Council safe recruitment policy and staff handbook.
- Ensuring that all work roles and responsibilities are risk assessed and, where necessary, DBS compliant.

Safe Workforce

- Ensure named safeguarding officers and service areas are represented at the Corporate Safeguarding Group meetings.
- Continue roll-out of revised mandatory training across Council through hybrid programme of e-learning, virtual and face to face options to meet diverse needs of service areas and employees.
- To work with the Oracle Fusion team to ensure safe and accurate transfer of current staff records and improve record reporting and review of staff training and data checks in relation to safeguarding training and compliance.

Safe Practice

- To ensure quality audits on cases are completed within Child and Family and Adult Services, as well involving leads from all Council Departments within the next Section 135 audit cycle. The audit is to gain assurance that arrangements are robust in all the Council's main service areas, and to identify improvements needed.

Safe Partnerships

- To invite leads in all service areas outside of social services to discuss how they review safe practice in their areas to help inform further improvements, and in readiness for next Section 135 audit.

Safe Voice

- Checking out how Swansea is 'Making safeguarding personal' by carrying out case audits within Quality Assurance framework.
- Development of advocacy offer and independent support to promote citizen rights and best interest decision within safeguarding and deprivation of liberty safeguards.
- Working within families, communities, and schools to promote safeguarding awareness.

Safe Performance:

- To incorporate findings from the Section 135 audit into future annual reports.
- To review set corporate performance indicators in readiness for reporting in 2022-23.

Your Response

We hope that you find the contents of this letter helpful and would welcome any comments on any of the issues raised within; however, we do not expect you to provide a formal response. We will make sure that consideration of the next Annual Report is scheduled into the Scrutiny Programme Committee's work plan for 2022/23.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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