

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 7<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2021

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2021

**“C588 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2020/21 (SCH)  
(SCRUTINY – ALL) –**

There was Corporate responsibility to ensure that there were effective arrangements in place for safeguarding children and adults who required specific Council services. The Annual Report 2020/21 provided an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding activities taking place across the Local Authority.

Councillor Gray said there had been an increase in child protection numbers due to the pandemic, notably where there were complex situations in larger families and where domestic violence played a significant part.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the work that had been undertaken to improve corporate arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children and adults be noted.
- (2) T H A T six monthly reports on work carried out to improve Corporate Safeguarding arrangements and the effectiveness of relevant Policies continue to be received by Cabinet.
- (3) T H A T the report be referred to Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Governance and Audit Committee for consideration.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To allow Cabinet to exercise effective oversight of this key area of corporate working and be assured of effective safeguarding taking place.
- (3) To respond to requests that each Scrutiny Committee and Governance and Audit Committee (given the previous Wales Audit Office Report) were provided with a safeguarding update.”

Attached as Appendix – Report to Cabinet: 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2021

Meeting of:	<b>Cabinet</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Monday, 07 June 2021</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report : 2020/21
Purpose of Report:	To update Cabinet on the work that has been undertaken in relation to Corporate arrangements for Safeguarding across the Council
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health
Responsible Officer:	Director of Social Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This is an issue which affects all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is Corporate responsibility to ensure that there are effective arrangements in place for safeguarding children and adults who require specific Council services.</li> <li>• This Annual Report 2020/21 provides an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding activities taking place across the Local Authority.</li> </ul>	

## **Recommendations**

- 1.** That Cabinet notes the work that has been undertaken to improve corporate arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children and adults.
- 2.** That Cabinet continues to receive six monthly reports on work carried out to improve Corporate Safeguarding arrangements and the effectiveness of relevant Policies.
- 3.** That the report is referred to Healthy Living and Social Care, Learning and Culture, Home and Safe Communities, Governance and Audit and Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 1.** To ensure that Cabinet is aware of recent developments in corporate arrangements for safeguarding.
- 2.** To allow Cabinet to exercise effective oversight of this key area of corporate working and be assured of effective safeguarding taking place.
- 3.** To respond to requests that each Scrutiny Committee and Governance and Audit Committee (given the previous Wales Audit Office Report) are provided with a safeguarding update.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1** Attached at Appendix 1 is the annual report that brings together safeguarding activity undertaken by the Social Services, Learning and Skills, Managing Directors Office and Resources and Environment and Housing. This provides a more holistic representation of safeguarding activity across the Council. The report provides a composite of activity across the directorates. Scrutiny Committees should particularly consider the elements of the report in line with their portfolio areas.
- 1.2** The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 was implemented in April 2016. This has brought about changes in particular relating to the introduction of a 'Duty to Report' which has meant a revision of the corporate safeguarding policy to bring staff's attention to this duty.
- 1.3** The 'Working Together to Safeguard People Guidance' under Part 7 of the Act provides guidance on corporate safeguarding for the council. Guidance on handling individual cases (Volumes 5 and 6) to protect children and adults at risk was launched in 2017. The Guidance provides advice on what should happen if an individual has concerns about the well-being or welfare of a child or an adult at risk.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** A set of new national safeguarding procedures, Wales Safeguarding Procedures were launched in November 2019. They detail the essential roles and responsibilities for practitioners to ensure that they safeguard children and adults who are at risk of abuse and neglect. The procedures are designed to standardise safeguarding practice across all of Wales and between agencies. These procedures support Local Authorities in fulfilling their statutory roles and functions to adults and children at risk.
- 2.2** HR have implemented an electronic transfer system for DBS checks. This will speed up the DBS checking process which forms part of the pre-employment checks. The system provides an electronic portal where applicants are able to apply for a DBS check online, allow checks to be approved and tracked by the Council, and the disclosure outcome will be available in the majority of cases within 24/48 hours.
- 2.3** The Vale of Glamorgan Council adopted the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Regional Strategy on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Structures and accountability are in place to ensure that we are able to deliver positive outcomes against the overarching objectives that have been agreed.
- 2.4** The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted upon service delivery however safeguarding activity has continued during this time to ensure those most vulnerable within our communities are supported and protected.

## **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Long-term – Considering ability across Directorates to meet long-term demands and horizon scanning in relation to our safeguarding responsibilities.
- 3.2** Integration – Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each other of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
- 3.3** Involvement – Ensuring voices of children and adult at risk are acknowledged and respected in all our interactions and service planning.
- 3.4** Collaboration – Cross Directorate ownership, accountability and understanding of our safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1** There are no direct resource implications arising from the Corporate Safeguarding work. However, the increased awareness of safeguarding and the responsibility to respond to concerns of those who may not be eligible for our services has brought about significant pressures within social services teams, and consequently we need to review processes to ensure clarity for people raising

concerns and who responds to these enquiries/notifications about individuals who are considered 'at risk', but are not known or eligible for our statutory services.

- 4.2** The other financial implication of note is the resource that will be required to implement some areas of the Corporate Safeguarding Work Plan which directorates will need to manage within their existing budgets.

### **Employment**

- 4.3** The Safer Recruitment Policy legitimately excludes consideration for appointment of all applicants for posts within regulated activity whose criminal actions/convictions mean that they are deemed unsuitable or who are included within the barred list.
- 4.4** Any application for employment for those posts included within the definition of regulated activity by candidates who are included on the relevant barred list will be considered a criminal act and reported to the Police and relevant registration body (if appropriate).
- 4.5** In relation to DBS arrangements, key elements of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 have been implemented.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.6** Legislation requires the Local Authority to make arrangements for ensuring the function to discharge their duties, having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. The Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and codes of practice issued under the Act, makes it clear that Safeguarding Children and Adults at risk of abuse and neglect is everyone's responsibility.
- 4.7** The Director of Social Services must ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are in place, both within the Local Authority and by relevant Partners. The Director of Social Services must oversee and report to Councillors, on a consistent basis regarding the operation, monitoring and improvement of child and adult safeguarding systems within the Local Authority. Defined arrangements with other Officers within the Local Authority, particularly the Head of Adult Services and Head of Children Services must be clear in relation to delegation and reporting arrangements relating to safeguarding issues.

## **5. Background Papers**

None.

## Appendix One

### Corporate Safeguarding Vale of Glamorgan Council

### Annual Report

April 2020 – March 2021



Cyngor Bro Morgannwg  
Vale of Glamorgan Council

The purpose of this report is to reflect on safeguarding activity during 2020/21 across the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The report outlines key activities on a corporate basis for the following:

**Section A:** Social Services

**Section B:** Learning and Skills

**Section C:** Managing Director and Resources (Safer Recruitment)

**Section D:** Environment and Housing (Housing; Community Safety; Shared Regulatory Services)



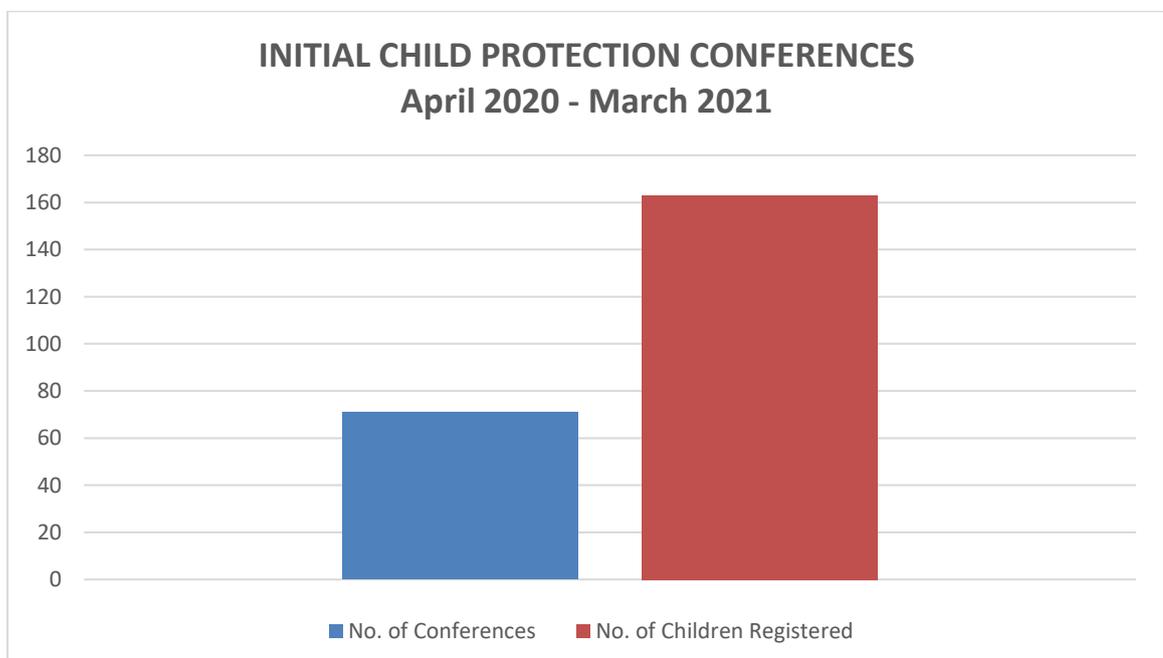
**A. Safeguarding in Social Services**

1. This section of the update brings together key safeguarding activity that has taken place across the three Divisions of the Social Services Directorate during the period **April 2020 – March 2021**
2. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on all areas of our service delivery. Safeguarding those who are most vulnerable in our communities has remained a priority.
3. The following activities will be addressed in turn:
  - Child Protection (Conferences & Registration)
  - Adults at Risk (formally POVA)
  - Allegations against Professionals (Formerly Part IV/Professional Concerns)
  - Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board
4. **Children’s Safeguarding & Review : Child Protection**

Child Protection Conferences are multi-agency meetings that include children and their parents/caregivers and take place when Child Protection (S.47 of the Children Act 1989) enquiries have identified that a child is at continued risk of harm. The S.47 enquiries will have been conducted by a social worker within the

children and young people's team alongside an assessment. These enquiries and subsequent outcomes will have been informed by multi-agency discussion and consideration of the child's individual circumstances in the context of their wider family.

5. The child protection conference functions, chairing roles and responsibilities, are delivered by the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division of Social Services. It has a function that is independent of Children's Services, although there is close collaboration and communication. This enables a level of independence and scrutiny in ensuring that effective practice is taking place, to enable children's voices to be heard and this reflects good outcomes for children and their families. It also ensures that appropriate and effective risk management is evident for those children deemed to be at most risk within our communities.
6. During the pandemic the operating model for conferences changed to taking place via virtual platform Teams. This has not impacted on our ability for appropriate discussion and decision making for children and their families. Children and their families have also continued to participate in child protection conferences, and as a consequence we have seen increased participation from parents who previously had not engaged within this forum.
7. The table below demonstrates how many initial child protection conferences were held in 2020/21.

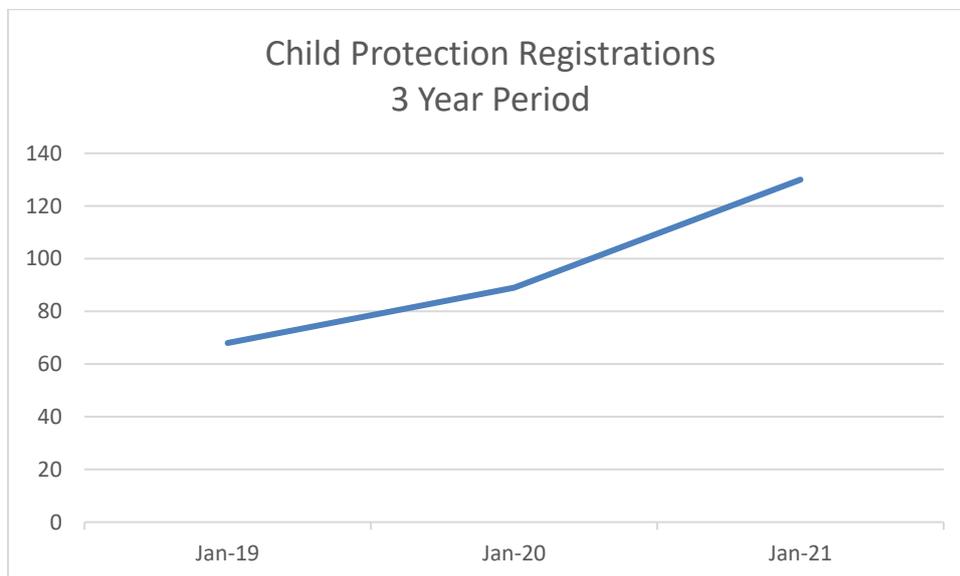


8. 94 Child Protection Conferences were held during this period, which resulted in 163 children becoming subject to Child Protection Registration and risk planning. The difference in figures of conferences held to number of children subject to registration reflects sibling groups where there are one or more children in the family.
9. The decision for a child to be subject to registration and child protection planning registered indicates that they have been identified as being at risk of significant harm. There are more children than conferences taking place as the figures reflect sibling groups of children. Not all conferences result in the child becoming subject of registration, in some cases it may be decided that the child is not at continuing risk of significant harm and there may be care and support needs to consider, during this period only one child was considered at Initial Conference that did not result in them becoming subject to a child protection plan and registration. The decision for registration and what category of registration is required, is determined within the child protection conference and considered within the parameters of the risks being identified.

The categories of risk for registration are:

- Physical Abuse
  - Emotional or Psychological Abuse
  - Sexual Abuse
  - Financial Abuse
  - Neglect
10. Children can be recorded as being at risk of abuse, neglect or harm under one, or more of these categories.
  11. There has been a significant increase in the number of initial conferences being held and numbers of children becoming subject to child protection planning. 2019/20 saw **106** children becoming subject to registration and child protection planning in contrast to **163** this year.
  12. This increase is reflective of the increased demand that has been experienced across children's services. Whilst Covid-19 has impacted on services there is not a direct correlation between limited service provision from our partner agencies and the increase being seen. Work is being undertaken to understand the various factors of this increase and themes that are being experienced across the Vale.
  13. 2020/21 has seen an overall increase in the numbers of children subject to child protection registration as of March 2021, 130 children were subject to CP planning and registration. The graph below demonstrates the year on year increase since March 2019. There is ongoing monitoring and scrutiny of this area of work from the management teams within Safeguarding and Children & Young People's Service. The numbers being seen in March 2019 were below the average numbers that this Local Authority has seen historically. We will continue

to monitor to ensure appropriate planning and resources are available to this critical area of safeguarding work.



**Adults at Risk (formally Protection of Vulnerable Adults)**

14. Safeguarding duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) apply to adult protection, as safeguarding is preventative as well as protective. Safeguarding is wider than the essential focus on those most at risk or needing protection from abuse, neglect and harm. Safeguarding includes ensuring the provision of safe and effective care; protecting from abuse, neglect and harm; optimising well-being, voice, choice and control, and preventing impairment of health and development.
15. Safeguarding is everyone’s business. However, the Act sets out particular duties for Local Authorities and relevant partner agencies e.g. Health and Police, working with adults. The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act, places a duty to report an “adult at risk” for all relevant partners for the Local Authority. There is a new duty for a Local Authority to make enquiries if it has reasonable cause to suspect that a person within its area (whether or not ordinarily resident there) is an adult at risk.
16. Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that an adult is at risk of abuse or neglect the Local Authority has a duty to undertake section 126 enquiries. These enquiries should normally be completed within seven days and enquiries should be made to determine what actions may be required to support the adult at risk and any ongoing protection planning that may be required. These enquiries should be person centred and ensure that the adult is consulted and spoken with to determine their understanding of the situation and any support needs they may have as well as considering potential risks.

17. The duties placed on the Local Authority by the SSWBA, have resulted in a significant increase in the number of safeguarding enquiries being undertaken. This has resulted in increased numbers of citizens coming to the attention of Social Services, where historically they would not have. The new Wales Safeguarding Procedures are being launched in November 2019 and there will be further consideration of the processes and structure in our front door service and within the Adult Safeguarding Team.
18. There were 602 adult safeguarding referrals received during 2020/21 period. The table below demonstrates previous years' numbers:

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-2019
357	323	318	375	445	619	602

19. We are mindful of the increase in referrals of adult safeguarding concerns as a result of the legislative changes and we are increasing capacity to ensure the best possible response. With the introduction of Welsh Community Care Information System, we are working to develop a consistent reporting mechanism in relation to the number of adult safeguarding referrals received; number of S126 enquiries being undertaken, and the outcomes of these enquiries.
20. Our current data indicates that following 602 referrals, there 440 s.126 enquiries were undertaken during this period. These enquiries were undertaken as there would have been reasonable cause to suspect that the adult was at risk of abuse or neglect. 67 cases required further protection planning of the adult at risk following enquiries. The new All Wales Safeguarding Procedures will standardise the determination outcomes of enquiries and will enable data capture against outcomes of these enquiries in a consistent manner.

**Safeguarding Allegations against Professionals/Positions of Trust**

21. This year has seen the implementation of a new set of national safeguarding procedures, Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019). A significant feature of these procedures has been the introduction of a combined approach (Adults & Children) to Safeguarding Allegations against Practitioners and those in Positions of Trust. The adult and children safeguarding teams have now adopted these procedures and adopted the combined approach to responding to allegations against practitioners.
22. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) has a duty to manage allegations and concerns about any person whose work/volunteering (paid or unpaid) brings them into contact with children or adults at risk. The Operational Manager for Safeguarding fulfils the LADO role for the Vale of Glamorgan Council with some

duties being delegated to the Principle Officer for Protection and Policy (Children's Safeguarding) and Adult Safeguarding Team Manager.

23. Managing cases under these procedures applies to a wider range of allegations than those in which there is reasonable cause to believe a child or adult at risk is suffering or is likely to suffer harm. It also applies to concerns that might indicate that a person is unsuitable to continue to work with children or adults at risk in their present position or in any capacity. It should be used in all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children or adults at risk has:
- *Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or adult at risk*
  - *May have committed a criminal offence against a child or adult at risk or that has a direct impact on the child or adult at risk*
  - *Behaved towards a child, children or adults at risk, in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children and/or adults*
24. There are a number of considerations when allegations have been made, the LADO (or delegated officer for safeguarding) will co-ordinate the multi-agency meetings and monitor the process if there are any investigations taking place i.e. criminal investigations, and ensure that during this process there is appropriate risk management and support plan in place.
25. With the new set of procedures there are five potential outcome determination to this process, these are:
- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation.
  - **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.
  - **Malicious:** there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.
  - **Unfounded:** there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the allegation or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of the circumstances.
  - **Unsubstantiated:** this is not the same as a false allegation. It means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
26. For all allegations a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the allegation was investigated and resolved, details of action taken and the outcome decisions reached are recorded.
27. During 2020/21 period we received 98 referrals in relation to concerns/allegations and of these 72 cases met the criteria to be considered within the safeguarding against practitioners' procedures.

28. 20 of these cases are ongoing. Those concluded (72) during this period, 51 were unsubstantiated; 18 substantiated; 3 unfounded. Referrals were made to the Disclosure & Barring Service when appropriate and a number of cases where there were concurrent police investigations into allegations resulted in prosecution.
29. It has been noted that there has been an increase in the number of instances where there has not been a specific incident of harm to a child, but the conduct of the individual has been of concern and referred to social services. An example of this type of referral is where the individual works within a setting that requires them to have an enhanced DBS but are arrested for an incident that happens within their personal life, for instance a perpetrator of domestic abuse.
30. There appears to be increased understanding and awareness of the need to report and consider the actions of practitioners within their private lives that call into question their suitability in roles that involve adults or children who may potentially be at risk.
31. This area of work is in development and key areas of findings in relation to both adult and children workforce will be collated and shared for information.

### **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**

32. The domestic violence MARAC is a multi-agency forum for agencies to share information with a view to identifying those at a **'high'** level of risk of serious harm and to jointly construct a management plan to provide professional support to all those at risk. This process is managed and co-ordinated via the Safer Vale Team within the Environment and Housing Directorate.
33. Following the merge of police forces in South Wales, policing in the Vale of Glamorgan is provided via the Eastern Unit which covers Cardiff and the Vale. In the Vale of Glamorgan, an effective and embedded fortnightly MARAC Meeting takes place, chaired by the South Wales Police Detective Inspector for Public Protection, with relevant staff in attendance. Representatives from both adult and children services attend these fortnightly meetings and contribute to the overall action planning.
34. The Operational Manager for Safeguarding sits on the MARAC Steering Group. This Group has a strategic role to monitor and review the progress effectiveness of the MARAC arrangements and process.

35. **Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPPA)**

The Local Authority fulfils the duty to co-operate Section 325(3) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 ("CJA 2003") by appropriate representation in MAPPA planning and meetings from Youth Offending Teams; Education; Housing; Social Services. The Local Authority is also represented on the MAPPA Strategic Management Board which is responsible for managing MAPPA activity across our region.

36. **Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board**

In response to the increased demands on all agencies during the Covid-19 pandemic the Cardiff & Vale Regional Safeguarding Board has operated an agreed critical operating model. This decision was made taking into account the increased demand on all agencies and the availability of those agencies to meaningfully contribute and participate in some areas of the boards work. Assurance of safeguarding activity has been made through exception reporting and through regular board meetings. Child Practice and Adult Practice Reviews have continued during this time. The Board's submission to Welsh Government of its Annual Plan has been delayed until end of July 2021, a copy of this plan will be provided within the next scrutiny report.

37. During 2020/21, 3 Child Practice Reviews (CPR) and 2 Adult Practice Reviews (APR) were published by the Regional Safeguarding Board. One of the published CPRs related to children living with the Vale of Glamorgan. The Corporate Safeguarding Group will be considering the learning and recommendations from this CPR and develop a corporate wide action plan.

38. Officers from across the Vale of Glamorgan are represented at the Regional Safeguarding Boards and continue to provide consistent participation and engagement across all areas of work. This ensures there is a shared ownership, accountability and understanding of safeguarding priorities across the region.



## Dysgu a Sgiliau Learning and Skills

### B. Safeguarding in Learning and Skills

1. Safeguarding activity in the Learning and Skills Directorate continues to evolve in line with requirements of national, regional and local developments in legislation, guidance and policy. During the COVID19 first lockdown period the Learning and Skills Directorate in conjunction with schools in line with Welsh Government guidance maintained a comprehensive 'Check In' tracker for all vulnerable children in schools. In subsequent lockdowns, this responsibility was retained by schools and in conjunction with local authority officers effective monitoring of the most vulnerable children was maintained.
2. The Directorate Management Team (DMT) consistently monitors operational safeguarding practice across the Directorate, this includes a standing safeguarding agenda item at monthly DMT meetings that has a particular focus on safer recruitment, safeguarding training, allegations against employees and volunteers, actions from Adult Practice Reviews (APRs) and Child Practice Reviews (CPRs) and compliance with statutory duties in relation to the licensing of Children in Employment and Entertainment (CIEE).
3. Directorate safeguarding policies, guidance and standard forms are available to support safeguarding practice for all employees and volunteers in the Directorate, Schools, Youth Service, Libraries and Adult Community Learning (ACL) for consistency in practice across the Directorate. All Vale schools have received a revised (January 2021) Model Safeguarding Policy provided by the

Directorate that is consistent with Welsh Government guidance, including the recently revised (Sept 2020) Keeping Learners Safe guidance. This was a substantial piece of work which will ensure that all staff follow the most up to date procedures. In addition, significant work is being undertaken within the Directorate, reviewing and renewing the 'physical restraint and time out' policy and procedures, an effective link up is in place between the safeguarding, health & safety and inclusion service in order to progress this work.

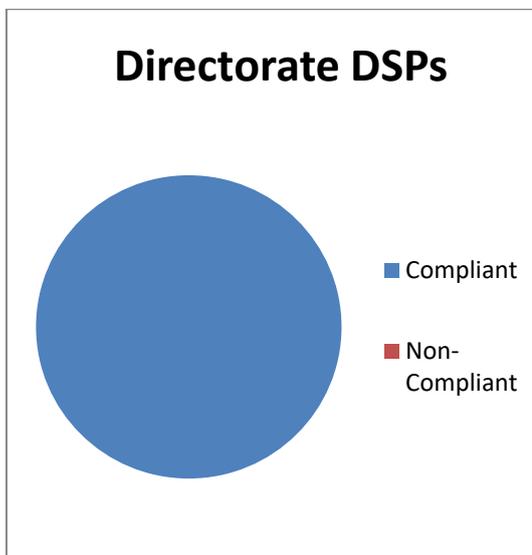
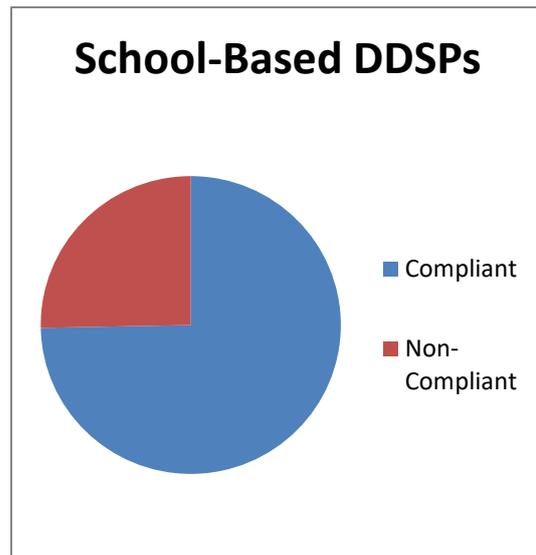
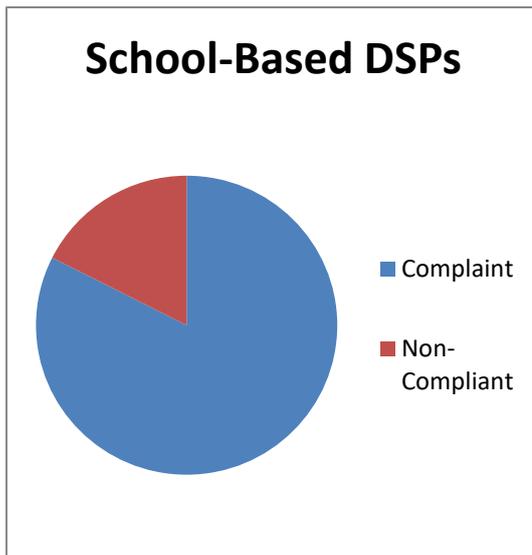
4. Mandatory annual safeguarding training is delivered consistently across the Directorate to standards set by Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding Board (RSB) and all employees and volunteers are expected to comply with statutory and local guidance in relation to safeguarding children and adults. An iDev Level 1 safeguarding package has been developed and rolled out to all school staff began in January 2021 and from September 2021 this will be available to all Directorate staff. This is a very exciting development and will ensure that all school staff can access this training remotely in future
5. Level Two training for Dedicated Safeguarding Person (DSPs) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Person (DDSPs) is delivered on-line 8 times each academic term to maximise the opportunities for attendance. All Directorate-based staff, including DSPs now have access to iDev accounts that will facilitate much easier maintenance of safeguarding training records currently held in standalone spreadsheets. School staff safeguarding training records are now monitored via iDev, currently 900+ staff since its release in January have accessed or completed the level 1 safeguarding training. The intention is to provide school-based DSPs with iDev accounts so that all DSP participation in safeguarding training from any source can be captured in one record and therefore improve attendance data.
6. **Compliance with annual safeguarding training**

School based DSPs - 47 of the 57 are in compliance, therefore compliance rate is 82%

School based DDSPs, 62 of the 83 are in compliance, therefore compliance rate is 75%

Directorate based DSPs, there are 25 out of 25 trained and compliance is therefore 100%

The school-based staff that are not currently compliant can be accounted for through long term sickness / absence from the workplace. Those not compliant are all booked on to training courses during summer term.



DSPs, DDSPs, Designated Safeguarding Governors (DSGs) and other staff have access to a bespoke programme of subject-specific Level Three safeguarding training delivered termly, with content developed in response to national, regional and local priorities. Current training priorities for the Learning and Skills Directorate include Neglect, Radicalisation and Extremism, Sexual Exploitation, Criminal Exploitation, Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking and Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

- Schools continue to develop a recognised Safeguarding Team that includes DSP, DDSP and DSG. Schools are encouraged to identify and promote membership of this team for all staff so that all employees and volunteers are clear about the mechanism for reporting safeguarding concerns, including the process for escalating safeguarding concerns outside the school where necessary. Schools are encouraged to include their Designated Safeguarding Governor in development of the Safeguarding Self Evaluation Report (SER), use of the safeguarding self-evaluation Audit Tool and Guidance that accompanies

Keeping learners safe, the review of policies and compliance with training expectations and safer recruitment and in monitoring the general effectiveness of safeguarding practice within the school.

8. The Directorate Safeguarding Officer in partnership with the Governor Support Unit, offer termly safeguarding training to all governors, including those in the DSG role. The new development of twilight training for governors delivered on-line is available to all Governors. Other training for Governors, Youth Service and other specific groups is delivered at times and venues to promote accessibility, including in the evening and on weekends. All training is evaluated and reviewed to facilitate regular development and ensure that safeguarding training is fit for purpose and meets need. The Directorate safeguarding officer is currently collaborating with safeguarding colleagues from Cardiff Local Authority and the Regional Safeguarding Board developing a regionally based Dedicated Safeguarding Governor training package that focusses at a strategic level so as to better identify risks / trends within school settings.
9. The on-line termly DSP Forum for each cluster of schools offers an opportunity for all school-based staff with a specific safeguarding role to share information and receive briefings on relevant subjects. The Forum is repeated each term, to allow schools to release DSP and DDSPs to attend without being absent from the school on the same date. The previous Forums were well-attended and participant evaluation forms indicate that the Forum is valued by safeguarding colleagues. The continuing objective is to develop the knowledge and confidence of DSPs, DDSPs and DSGs in their specific safeguarding roles. The participation of local independent educational establishments in the DSP Forum to ensure consistency in safeguarding practice across Vale educational provision has been acknowledged by Welsh Government as good practice.
10. Despite the impact of COVID19 significant levels of work is ongoing within the Directorate, reviewing and renewing the 'physical restraint and time out' policy and procedures, an effective link up is in place between the safeguarding, health & safety and inclusion service. All Headteachers have had information raising input from the Directorate regarding the different forms of restraint and restrictive practices, along with the impact of the Welsh Government endorsement of the clear indication that such practices should be in line with Welsh Government is clear that such actions should be carried out only within the context of the European Convention on Human Rights and in line with the principles described in the *Human Rights Framework on Restraint* produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Directorate are liaising with the special school YYD to look at ways of better supporting the needs of younger learners needing restraint. Despite the impact of COVID19 the Directorate have managed to continue providing Team Teach training opportunities to schools by providing a blend of face to face and online learning for Team teach that requires schools to send staff in paired bubbles. By September 2021 it is planned to roll out a specific training offer on restraint and interventions of this nature to all Heads and SMT in schools and at this point the revised policy should also be shared.

11. The Directorate continues to demonstrate regulatory compliance in relation to licensing children in employment and entertainment, including the licensing of chaperones. The Directorate continues to participate in national discussions to achieve consistency in licensing practice across local authorities in Wales. As part of a planned inclusion team restructure there will be a post primarily dedicated to licensing and CIEE to further recognise the significance of this area of work. The inclusion Manager and dedicated Administrative officer are liaising closely with colleagues in Cardiff to ensure greater parity of approach for this area and have revised processes accordingly.
12. The Directorate continues to invest considerable effort in supporting schools to achieve 100% compliance with Safer Recruitment. Compliance rates have improved significantly since 2014 with recent months during COVID19 recording 100% compliance, (please refer to the Safer Recruitment section of this report for detailed figures).
13. The Safeguarding Officer and other senior officers continue to represent the Directorate at the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan RSB and on all RSB sub-groups, thereby strengthening working relationships with partner agencies. The Directorate is recognised as making a valuable contribution to the work of the RSB and for consistent attendance at meetings. Directorate officers also participate actively in the Corporate Safeguarding Group. The Safeguarding Officer also contributes to the Wales Safeguarding in Education Group and to national and regional multi-agency working groups in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation, Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking, Children in Employment and Entertainment and Elective Home Education. The Safeguarding Officer also participates in local multi-agency activity such as the Cohesion and Engagement Steering Group, VAWDA Steering Group and Regional Channel Panel. The Safeguarding Officer continues to participate in national groups working on revised editions of key All-Wales safeguarding and child protection guidance documents. Participation in national and local groups ensures that the Directorate has access to up-to-date safeguarding information and is able to influence the development of national and local strategies and guidance.
14. The Vale of Glamorgan domestic abuse Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) continues to develop and refine its processes and the participation of a Learning and Skills officer enables appropriate information-sharing to develop robust support for children experiencing the effects of domestic abuse. Schools recognise the importance and value of MARAC, responding promptly and appropriately to requests for information. Vale schools continue to receive Police Protection Notifications (PPNs) from South Wales Police, which significantly enhance knowledge of the child's lived experience in relation to domestic and missing person incidents and allow the development of appropriate support for the relevant child. The Directorate effectively participates in Operation Encompass, an agreement that requires PPNs to be shared with schools before registration on the day of receipt.

15. The Directorate continues to prioritise the management of allegations of abuse against teachers and other members of staff in accordance with Section 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. A database is maintained to monitor progress of professional concern cases which meet the threshold for consideration and to inform the Directorate Senior Management Team. A training course to support schools in managing allegations of abuse against staff is available. The Safeguarding Officer continues to liaise closely with colleagues from the Education Welfare Service, Behavioural Support Team and Wellbeing Coordinator in relation to safeguarding concerns arising from attendance, physical intervention and Elective Home Education issues respectively.
16. The Directorate continues to monitor the effectiveness of the Team Teach Physical Intervention model and training remains available for all schools to improve the ability of school staff to use de-escalation techniques to manage challenging behaviour. Work continues to evaluate the safeguarding implications for children subject to fixed-term or permanent exclusions. The Safeguarding Officer also liaises with senior officers with responsibility for wellbeing and nurture, to ensure that all activity relating to child welfare is linked and supported. The Directorate continues to review the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies and recognises the impact of unresolved bullying on wellbeing outcomes for children.
17. The development of a robust and consistent approach to safeguarding across all parts of the Directorate remains a priority.



## Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr ac Adnoddau Managing Director and Resources

### C. Managing Director and Resources Directorate

The Managing Director and Resources Directorate report outlines ongoing progress in relation to compliance with the Council's Safer Recruitment Policy for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 in comparison to the same period in the previous year.

#### **Overall Compliance – April 2020 to March 2021 (Schools and Corporate Services)**

1. Compliance with the policy for April 2020 to March 2021 for all appointments was 98% (6 breach cases), compared to 98% from the same reporting period last year (April 2019 to March 2020). A full breakdown of figures can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1: Compliance Rates for Corporate and Schools New Starters**

Month	Number of new starters under Safer Recruitment	Number of employees with all documentation or RA in place	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020
April	36	36	100%	100%
May	22	22	100%	100%
June	10	10	100%	97%
July	18	18	100%	100%
Aug	10	9	90%	100%
Sept	75	72	96%	96%
Oct	31	30	97%	97%
Nov	45	44	98%	100%
Dec	16	16	100%	100%
Jan	36	36	100%	98%
Feb	26	26	100%	100%
Mar	24	24	100%	100%
Total	263	257	98%	98%

### Schools

1. Compliance with the policy for April 2020 to March 2021 for school appointments was 97%, which is no change from the same reporting period last year (97%).
2. Members will note that for the month of September 2020 (which represents the highest recruitment activity within the school academic year), compliance was 95% which is the same in comparison to September 2019 (95%).
3. The current escalation process requires a discussion with the Head Teacher regarding non-compliance and monitoring of repeated non-compliance by particular schools throughout the year.
4. A full breakdown of compliance rates for schools and actual figures can be found in Table 2.

**Table 2: Compliance Rates for Schools New Starters**

Month	Number of new starters under Safer Recruitment	Number of employees with all documentation or RA in place	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020
April	12	12	100%	100%
May	9	9	100%	100%
June	3	3	100%	94%
July	3	3	100%	100%
Aug	0	0	100%	100%
Sept	62	59	95%	95%
Oct	15	14	93%	88%
Nov	30	29	97%	100%
Dec	4	4	100%	100%
Jan	25	25	100%	96%
Feb	7	7	100%	100%
Mar	4	4	100%	100%
Total	174	169	97%	97%

**Corporate**

- The compliance rate for Corporate Services for April 2020 to March 2021 was 99%. This is a reduction on the previous year (100%).
- A full breakdown of compliance rates and actual figures can be found in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Compliance Rates for Corporate New Starters**

Month	Number of new starters under Safer Recruitment	Number of employees with all documentation or RA in place	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020
April	24	24	100%	100%
May	13	13	100%	100%
June	7	7	100%	100%
July	15	15	100%	100%
Aug	10	9	90%	100%
Sept	13	13	100%	100%
Oct	16	16	100%	100%
Nov	15	15	100%	100%
Dec	12	12	100%	100%
Jan	11	11	100%	100%
Feb	19	19	100%	100%
Mar	20	20	100%	100%
Total	175	174	99%	100%

## Return of Risk Assessments (Schools and Corporate Services)

7. Human Resources continue to monitor the return of risk assessments for both Schools and Corporate services. Over the reporting period of April 2020 to March 2021, 6 new starters commenced employment without all the required checks in place or a signed risk assessment as allowed for by the policy.
8. During the year April 2020 to March 2021, 57 new starters were recruited under a Risk Assessment. This represents 21.7% of all new starters. This is a slight increase on the previous year (20.9%).

## On-going measures

9. The e-learning facility is available to all Vale of Glamorgan Council employees within corporate Directorates who have access to the Council's StaffNet through the new iDev system. As all schools (excluding Cowbridge Comp) now have access to iDev, there is the potential to develop an e-learning solution and tracking system that can further support our Safer Recruitment Objectives.
10. The Safer Recruitment escalation process requires Human Resources to identify and monitor outstanding documentation at the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> calendar week following the employee taking up employment. Discussions are then held with the Head Teacher who in turn meets with the member of staff and confirms the outcome with Human Resources. The Directorate Safeguarding Officer for Learning and Skills is also informed at the 8<sup>th</sup> week. Human Resources continue to monitor weekly and also inform the Chair of Governors and Safeguarding Governor if the documentation remains outstanding at the 10<sup>th</sup> week and 12<sup>th</sup> week. At the time of reporting there are no schools' appointments and one corporate appointment at the 8<sup>th</sup> / 10<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> week.
11. DBS Checks are undertaken through the e-Bulk system introduced in 2019 and this increases the speed of pre-employment checks. The disclosure outcome will be available in the majority of cases within 24/48 hours.
12. Communication with relevant Head Teachers where issues are identified remains in place as well as when necessary including the subject on the agenda for Head Teacher meetings, Head Teacher Steering group meetings and Designated Senior Person for child protection DSP Forum meetings attended by school safeguarding leads.
13. In addition, compliance of the policy is discussed at each corporate safeguarding group meeting to continually review the effectiveness of the policy.

## Conclusion

14. Compliance with the Safer Recruitment Policy remains less than the expected 100% compliance on a consistent basis. The measures outlined in this report will need to continue to be applied to support this.
15. Compliance in corporate services remains high and this will need to remain closely monitored going forward to ensure this trend continues.



**D. ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING**

**HOUSING**

Safeguarding remains a key priority for the Housing team and a number of activities and events have taken place over the last 12 months to strengthen processes and raise awareness amongst staff, tenants and partners. The Departmental Management team monitors any safeguarding concerns regularly and these are fed down through team meetings to front line staff. Safeguarding is also standard agenda item at staff meetings and monthly 1-1s.

All Housing staff receive regular training in Safeguarding and related themes.

Staff from Housing are represented on the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board as well as several sub groups looking at issues around Exploitation and Child and Adult Practise Reviews, and Polices, Procedures and Practice. Members of the Housing team have now been trained to be able to undertake Child and Adult Practise Reviews, acting as the Chair or Reviewer and have since been allocated Reviews to conduct on behalf of the Board.

Front line staff have continued to promote Safeguarding and have attended awareness raising sessions related to Child and Adult Practise reviews during the last 12 months. In addition, Safeguarding remains a fixed agenda item on all team meeting agenda's which allows for general discussions to take place about a range of related issues,

including referral mechanisms, warning signs, shared learning and things to look out for when undertaking day to day work.

Front line staff have also worked closely with partners to tackle domestic abuse. This has included a nominated representative attending the MARAC meetings and sharing updates on behalf of colleagues in the Housing Management, Rents and Homelessness Teams and where appropriate support providers are also contacted to attend and to update about victims or perpetrators. Training has ensured staff remain able to identify concerns and work with partners to minimise risks and protect victims.

The lockdown has posed new challenges and the number of home visits has reduced significantly, however staff have carried out over 1,200 telephone welfare checks of vulnerable households in order to check on well-being and identify any cause for concerns. The need to identify and target support towards vulnerable people is being developed further by a new Tenant Profiling project. This 'intelligence led' approach has been designed to gather detailed personal information about tenants with a view to focussing interventions towards and maintaining close contact with, those households most likely to be experiencing difficulties.

Housing Services staff record all MARF and Adult Safeguarding referrals on a spreadsheet. During 2019-20, the Housing team submitted the following number of MARF's and Adult Safeguarding referrals:

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>No. of MARFs</b>	<b>No. of Adult Safeguarding Referrals</b>
Housing Solutions	95	1
Supporting People	0	1
Housing Strategy	0	0
Customer Liaison Team	0	0
Accommodation Solutions Team	0	0
UKRS	0	0
Housing Management and Rents	14	2

The majority of referrals are made by the Housing Solutions Team which is due to the team completing and submitting a MARF for all children placed in temporary accommodation including the Council's homeless hostel (Ty Iolo).

When a MARF or Adult Safeguarding referral is submitted by Housing staff a response should be received to advise what action, if any, is being taken by Children's or Adult Services. If after 48 hours this information is not received it is chased up by a phone call. If any concerns the staff member will escalate to their Manager who should contact a Senior Officer in Social Services to discuss the case and voice any concerns.

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic and lockdown in March 2020 we have focused on the provision of critical front-line services which include homelessness. The Housing Solutions & Supporting People Team introduced the following processes in respect of safeguarding:

- Establishment of fortnightly multi-agency Centralised Co-ordination Cell following Welsh Government guidance for local authorities on supporting rough sleepers during lockdown. The Cell aims to manage the logistics for all accommodation, health and support facilities, as there is particular concern about the impact of these changes for vulnerable at risk of/homeless individuals and their families as services closed or reduced their visiting and intervention capacity in the community in order to protect the public and staff.
- Due to the increased demands on the homelessness service following publication of the Welsh Government guidance in respect of COVID 19, the Housing Solutions Team block booked 76 rooms across 3 hotel establishments in the Vale to provide emergency accommodation for those presenting as homeless or rough sleeping.
- The Housing Solutions Team has made regular welfare calls to hotel residents by telephone and are in contact with the B&B providers on a daily basis. More recently, Housing Solutions staff have also started visiting the hotels on a twice weekly basis in line with social distancing measures.
- All individuals placed in temporary accommodation and B&B hotels during this period are referred for floating support via the telephone to Pobl, Taff and Llamau, who are all specialist support providers commissioned by the Council. All received daily phone calls initially, reducing to every other day or twice weekly depending on the needs of the person. More recently, Pobl has started providing a drop-in service at the hotels in line with social distancing measures.
- A twice weekly drop in substance misuse service is also being provided by Taith at 2 of the hotels.

## **Safeguarding activity within Community Safety (Housing and Building Services) Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)**

The Vale of Glamorgan Council adopted the VAWDASV Regional Strategy on 30th July 2018 (min C392). Structures and accountability are in place to ensure that we are able to deliver positive outcomes against the overarching objectives that were agreed.

There was a total of 431 MARAC cases (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) which is a multi-agency meeting to discuss safeguarding issues for victims of domestic abuse that have been assessed as high risk during 2020/21. This was an increase of 13 cases based on 2019/20 figures. This shows that despite public perception during COVID 19 there was not a significant increase in high risk case being reported. During 2020/21 twice weekly discussions were implemented for high risk cases with the aim of improving safeguarding measures and offering support at the earliest opportunity as opposed to waiting for a fortnightly MARAC meeting. From 21st September 2020 until 31st March 2021, 244 cases were discussed and reviewed at Vale twice weekly meeting. 73 cases out of the 244 were later discussed via the MARAC meeting in order to review the case to ensure all safeguarding options had been considered and implemented.

During 2020/21 the DARRC service received 1204 Public Protection Notices (PPN's) shared from South Wales Police, in addition, there were 339 PPN's that did not provide consent, therefore a total of 1543 PPN's were generated for standard/medium domestic abuse incidents. This was a reduction based on the previous year by 103 PPN's compared to 1646 PPN's received in 2019/20. Quality data is being collected for the service area in order for agencies to better understand the needs and the demands to enable improvements in commissioning of services.

The Supporting People team provide funding to Community Safety to provide Target Hardening equipment for victims of domestic abuse. This service is tailored to the needs and risk of the victim, for example CCTV, intruder alarm, door locks and lighting is offered in order to make the victim feel safer and enable them to remain living in their own home. During 2020/21, 97 properties within the Vale of Glamorgan received target hardening, this was higher than the 82 properties that received target hardening the year before. The majority of victims want to remain in their own home and therefore the service enables the appropriate safeguarding is in place, meet the needs of the victim and is a cost-effective service for the Council in terms of not requiring refuge provision.

The Local Authority are in the process of implementing Ask & Act level 2 of the National Training Framework training as directed by Welsh Government. The training commenced in November 2020 and to date 450 Vale of Glamorgan staff members have completed the training. From September 2021 we will be delivering training for Level 3 of Ask & Act.

In March 2020, when lockdown measures were introduced as a result of COVID -19 there was a decrease in the number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the Police. This was a national trend. Agencies quickly adapted to new ways of working

that had to be introduced and there were strong messages via social media and television campaigns to let people know that services were still operating and were available to support people. However, for some victims it proved more difficult to access help due to them not have a safe space in which to reach out. Work across the region took place to identify ways in which safe spaces could be provided for victims to seek help, for example doctors' surgeries, pharmacists and supermarkets. Ongoing work is now taking place to ensure that agencies engage with each other and with victims to plan for a future spike (as is the trend in other countries) and to also learn from the past few months.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 enacted new provisions aimed at reforming the anti-social behaviour rules and tools previously available. The changes have made it easier for the Vale of Glamorgan to respond swiftly to reports of anti-social behaviour.

The Community Safety Team within the Council co-ordinate the multi-agency Problem Solving Group (PSG) which meets monthly to discuss incidents of ASB to ensure that early identification and intervention can be offered to perpetrators and to put in place safeguarding measures for victims of ASB.

Within the Vale there is a 4-stage approach to managing ASB which provides the opportunity to identify wider needs and support requirements and aims to stop the behaviour turning into criminal activity. For young people the 4-stage approach is the same, however a restorative approach is adopted to maximize the opportunity of stopping any further incidents and to identify preventative support that can be offered via the Youth Offending Team.

During 2020/21 there were a total of 1481 referrals made to the Community Safety Team, out of which 439 referrals were for adults, 305 for young people and 439 were area location with no subjects attached.

During 2020/2021 the Community Safety Team alongside partners were successful in obtaining 5 Civil Injunction Order's on individuals causing significant anti-social behaviour. The Orders were a last resort following intensive preventative support being offered on numerous occasions. The Orders were successful and did stop the behaviour. In addition, the team were successful in gaining 3 Community Protection Warning and 1 Community Protection. A Community Protection Notice is aimed to prevent unreasonable behaviour that is having a negative impact on the local community's quality of life.

Environmental anti-social behaviour saw a sharp rise in reported incidents as a result of Covid-19 lockdown measures. There was a 179% increase in reported ASB Environmental incidents from 17 reported recorded incidents for the March 2020 compared to 316 for the for the March 2021. The sharp increase for anti-social behaviour incidents has continued as a pattern over the last few months and has

identified the increased need to work in partnership and to implement effective solutions to ensure people's safety.

37 partnerships action plans have been implemented during 2020/2021 to support repeat victims of ASB in order to reduce the risk of threat or harm.

### **Channel Panel (Prevent)**

Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The programme uses a multi-agency approach to protect vulnerable people by:

- Identifying people at risk
- Assessing the nature and extent of that risk
- Developing the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

There is a regional Cardiff and Vale multi agency Channel Panel that meet to discuss the referrals and to ensure that the appropriate action is taken.

There were 4 Channel Panel referrals adopted 2020/2021 and 1 not adopted. This Compares to 0 in 2019/2020

## **SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES**

In delivering the Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing functions, Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) contributes to the Council's wider Safeguarding responsibilities in several ways.

2020-21 saw another busy year regarding the **Safeguarding of older and vulnerable adults**.

### ***Doorstep Crime and Scams***

SRS responds to instances of doorstep crime and scams, supporting those affected and their families where possible. These crimes can have a devastating effect on the emotional as well as the financial wellbeing of residents, and the following examples give an indication of the types of interventions undertaken over the course of the year.

During 2020-21, the service dealt with 114 Doorstep Crime and 112 Scams cases. A total of 36 residents were identified through the year as having suffered a doorstep crime incident or as having been on the receiving end of a scam. In one case, a resident was told she needed to move her money as her bank account was compromised. Scammers spoofed the local police station number to make it appear that the Police were making the call and the resident lost money as a result. This was refunded by the bank following support provided by SRS in assisting the resident to write in, explaining that she had been tricked by a push payment scam. Some £10,070 in redress was achieved for residents.

Given the significant pressure on the Shared Service in delivering its COVID enforcement response, it was particularly disappointing that some of the scams identified locally involved rogue traders preying on the fears of residents during the early months of the pandemic. Examples in this context include a case where fake COVID test kits were being offered for sale (when at the time tests were not readily available), and driveway treatments which were purported to stop the spread of the disease.

A number of prosecutions of doorstep criminals and rogue traders concluding in 2020-21 resulted in custodial sentences for the defendants and compensation for the victims.

Over the course of the year, four training sessions were delivered to partners and front line services via Microsoft Teams, while GP surgeries and pharmacies across the region were supplied with new awareness raising material on scams and frauds to be displayed in practices and in front windows, delivering key preventative advice.

## **Call blockers**

These devices can put an end to nuisance or malicious calls. They can be installed at the homes of residents being repeatedly targeted by scams and once fitted, prevent all calls coming through other than those from recognised friends and family numbers. SRS installed 8 call blockers during the last year in residents' homes helping to reduce nuisance and scam calls. Since 2014, SRS has installed a total of 59 call blockers to protect older and vulnerable people and each of these is estimated to block up to 5 nuisance or scam calls a day.

Turning to the **Safeguarding of young people**, SRS contributed through its compliance and enforcement activities in 2020-21 as follows:

A number of underage sales operations took place during 2020-21 involving the test purchasing of a range of goods including tobacco and alcohol. In an underage sales case that has since concluded in court, a Vale of Glamorgan trader was fined for selling a craft knife to a 15 year old volunteer. The defendant pleaded guilty to an offence under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and she was fined £2000, ordered to pay costs of £1290 and a victim surcharge of £170.

Further work was conducted during the year to tackle the supply of nitrous oxide (NOS) to young people. Nitrous oxide, also known as 'laughing gas', is a substance with several legitimate uses in medicine and catering; it is also a popular recreational drug amongst young people. When inhaled, it can make users feel euphoric and relaxed, with some reporting hallucinations. However, inhaling nitrous oxide can be dangerous, and can lead to loss of blood pressure, fainting and even heart attack. These risks are likely to be exacerbated if exposure to the gas is combined with alcohol or other drugs. Nitrous oxide is commonly sold in small metal canisters containing the gas which is then transferred into a balloon for inhalation. These small metal canisters are sold in bulk online and may be presented for use as a whipped cream propellant. A multi-agency operation took place in 2020-21 visiting premises suspected of selling nitrous oxide to children. The premises were inspected and given guidance on the law relating to the supply of NOS.

Finally, Shared Regulatory Services has contributed to the wider Safeguarding of residents and visitors to the area through its **licensing of taxi drivers** in 2020-21. While the vast majority of drivers are reputable and the journeys they provide take place without issue, there are occasions when the SRS has to act to protect the public, particularly the vulnerable. Last year saw one Vale of Glamorgan driver referred to the Licensing Committee for consideration due to alleged incidents of inappropriate behaviour.