

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 7th January 2019.

Report of the Leader

Corporate Safeguarding Mid-Year Report

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet Members on the work that has been undertaken during the period in relation to corporate arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children and adults who require specific Council services. To provide overview of progress of the corporate safeguarding group work plan and other safeguarding activities taking place across the Local Authority.

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 an annual report and a six-monthly mid-year report on work carried out to improve corporate safeguarding arrangements and the effectiveness of relevant policies.
3. That the report is referred to the Healthy Living and Social Care, Learning and Culture, Homes and Safe Communities, Environment and Regeneration and Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

Reasons for the 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.
3. To ensure corporate wide scrutiny of Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.

Background

2. The Corporate Safeguarding Working Group was established in this authority to learn lessons from the CSSIW and Estyn 2011 joint report following their investigation into the way Pembrokeshire County Council was managing allegations of professional abuse and its arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children in education.

3. The group has been working through an action plan to improve safeguarding across the Council. The Corporate Safeguarding policy has been developed and implemented.
4. Cabinet agreed a Safer Recruitment Policy for the Council and Schools (January 2013). The Policy has been in place since April 2013. It has been adopted by all Vale of Glamorgan schools and throughout the Council. There continues to be sustained improvements for safer recruitment policies across the Council, including education and practice continues to improve.

Relevant Issues and Options

5. This is a mid-year highlight report providing a summary of activity by the Corporate Safeguarding Group. The end of year report (April 2019) will be accompanied by appendix reports from all directorates outlining their contribution to corporate safeguarding and the wider safeguarding agenda.
6. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 was implemented in April 2016. This has brought about significant changes, in particular, relating to the introduction of 'Duty to Report' for all Local Authority employees. A significant focus of corporate safeguarding has been to ensure that there is widespread awareness of employee's responsibilities in terms of 'Duty to Report'. An awareness raising campaign took place last year through the production of posters/leaflets and also a designated telephone number was established for reporting. A mandatory safeguarding e-module was launched for all employees during National Safeguarding Week 2018 and this will provide all employees with safeguarding awareness information. We will also be able to gather data and information in relation to individual directorate's engagement with this important agenda.
7. The new 'Working Together to Safeguard People Guidance' under Part 7 of the new Act is now published. Guidance on handling individual cases (volumes 5 and 6) to protect children and adults at risk is now in place and safeguarding practice within both adult and children's social services are being aligned to that guidance. 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, and how these reports should be responded to by Social Services.
8. The Corporate Safeguarding Group is well attended by all the Directorates and meets on a quarterly basis with standing agenda items including Safer Recruitment, Regional Safeguarding Board and a Work Plan.
9. The Corporate Safeguarding Group has developed a Work Plan that focuses on the key areas that have been identified as features of corporate safeguarding arrangements. Membership of the group has been agreed; Terms of Reference are in place; Areas of Safeguarding activity across the Local Authority are being identified and appropriate persons are invited to represent their divisions/directorates. The group have also contributed to the development of a Corporate Safeguarding page on Staffnet to further strengthen the visibility and raise awareness of the remit of Corporate Safeguarding.
10. The demonstration of these features show an effective commitment to the safeguarding agenda across the Local Authority.

The areas include:

Corporate Leadership

Objective: To ensure that there are appropriate appointed persons across the Local Authority who are accountable and responsible for safeguarding.

Corporate Policy

Objective: The Corporate Safeguarding Policy is accessible, relevant and there is an awareness of this policy across the Local Authority.

Scrutiny and Assurance

There is a sufficient level of oversight and reporting on safeguarding activity within the Corporate Safeguarding Group and across the Local Authority.

Policy and procedure in relation to safer recruitment is adhered to and performance data is analysed in relation to this.

11. In addition to Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, Part 7 of the Social Services and Well Being Act requires there to be Regional Safeguarding Boards for Adults and Children. For the Vale of Glamorgan the region is the Cardiff and Vale area.
12. The Vale of Glamorgan Council has good office representation across all aspects of the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Boards both for Adults and Children. There are been a number of successful development days for the Board and the Director of Social Services for the Vale of Glamorgan is the Co-Chair of the Regional Safeguarding Boards.
13. The work of the Safeguarding Boards is wide ranging and reported through an annual report. During this year the Safeguarding boards have prioritised improving the approach to Child/Adult Practice reviews, and reporting safeguarding performance.
14. There remains effective leadership and response to areas of exploitation and professional allegations/abuse with designated lead roles for these areas of safeguarding activity. Exploitation was the focus for Safeguarding week which included a programme of events and workshops across the region that brought professionals together. This was concluded on the 16th November 2018 with the Safeguarding Awards Evening at Cardiff Bay Police Station.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

15. 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. As a consequence we have had to review processes to ensure clarity for people raising concerns and whom responds to these enquiries/notifications about individuals who are considered 'at risk'.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

16. There is no sustainability or climate change implications arising directly from this report.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

17. The Law relating to the safeguarding and protection of children from harm is set out in a variety of legislation, secondary legislation and guidance. This includes the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, Human Rights Act, the United Nations

Convention on the rights of the child, The Children Act 1989, The Children Act and Education Acts.

18. The duties imposed on a Local Authority are to safeguard and protect children and adults from risk of harm, to make investigations into circumstances in which they may arise, safeguarding issues and duties to make arrangements for ensuring that the function to the Local Authorities are discharged while having regard to the need to safeguard and report the welfare of children and adults at risk.
19. Legislation requires Local Authority and Partner Agencies to make arrangements for ensuring the discharge of duties while having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. Safeguarding Children and Adults at risk of abuse and neglect is everyone's responsibility and 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.
20. In relation to DBS arrangements, key elements of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 have been implemented.

Crime and Disorder Implications

21. 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).

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

22. 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.

Corporate/Service Objectives

23. The work of the Corporate Safeguarding Group assists the Council in meeting the following corporate objectives:

Well-being Outcome 4: An Active and Healthy Vale

Objective 8: Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living:

- develop and implement a corporate policy on safeguarding to provide a clear strategic direction and lines of accountability across the Council.
- work with partners through the Cardiff and Vale Local Safeguarding Children's Board to develop a Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy.

"We have a responsibility to safeguard our vulnerable residents and we will continue to work with partners to improve the wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents, their families and carers".

Policy Framework and Budget

24. This is a matter for Executive decision by the Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

25. This is an issue which affects all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

26. Healthy Living and Social Care, Learning and Culture and Corporate Performance and Resources.

Background Papers

Cabinet - 3rd September 2018 - Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2017/18 (Minute No. C404)

Appendix 1 - Annual Report - April 2017 - March 2018.

Appendix 2 - Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding Boards Annual Report 2017/18

Contact Officer:

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Officers Consulted

Corporate Safeguarding Group.

Responsible Officer:

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