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| <b>MEETING</b>              | Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee   |
| <b>DATE</b>                 | 18 July 2024   |
| <b>TITLE</b>                | Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools   |
| <b>REASON TO SCRUTINISE</b> | Assurances to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee about the Department for Education's safeguards |
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| <b>CABINET MEMBER</b>       | Councillor Beca Brown  |

## 1. Why does it need to be scrutinised?

- 1.1. This report is submitted in response to a request from the members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to receive information about the safeguarding arrangements of the Education Department.

## 2. What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

- 2.1. The intention of the report is to submit information on safeguarding arrangements in schools, as well as the guidance and support provided in this field by the Education Department to reassure the members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee of the propriety of the arrangements.

## 3. Summary and key issues.

- 3.1. In partnership with all Council departments the Education Department fulfils its responsibilities for managing the safeguarding and protection of children across the education service.
- 3.2. Corporate safeguarding policies and procedures are created jointly, are monitored, and evaluated regularly with regular input from the Education Department.
- 3.3. Safeguarding is a regular item on the Education Management Team's agenda providing a regular platform to consider strategic matters in the field.

## 4. Background / Context

- 4.1. The Education Department's Safeguarding Arrangements:

### 4.2. Policies:

- 4.3. The Education Department provides standard policies for schools which reflect the model in the 2020 Keeping Learners Safe Circular.
- 4.4. A comprehensive Safeguarding Policy, which is reviewed annually, is shared with our providers at the beginning of the academic year. The policy clearly highlights the responsibilities, definitions of abuse and contacts at the Authority in relation to this field. See **Appendix 1**.
- 4.5. The Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education keeps the policy updated and considers national guidance or the guidance of the North Wales Safeguarding Board where appropriate before reviewing it each year.
- 4.6. In addition to the Safeguarding Policy, a full range of other various policies relating to safeguarding is provided (please see the comprehensive list in **Appendix 2** - Education Department's Safeguarding Report 2024).
- 4.7. It is ensured that the policies are adopted through the Annual Safeguarding Report to the Governing Body and the quality assurance visits by the Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education.
- 4.8. The policies are updated annually by the Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education. It is the responsibility of the schools to personalise the standard policies with the details that relate to them specifically.
- 4.9. The Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education ensures input from the Education Department in strategic matters. They represent the Department and offer guidance at national, regional and authority level meetings and at relevant sub-groups. They present regular feedback from the meetings for the attention of the Head of Education Department and represent and contribute in full to child practice reviews regionally as required.
- 4.10. The Education Department collaborates effectively with the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service. The Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education works closely with the service to ensure that the department safeguards children who are not in mainstream education in accordance with the guidelines by;
  - Safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children who have not been given a place in school, or who have been excluded from school, including those taught at pupil referral units or by the home tutor service.
  - In terms of children who are home educated by parents or guardians, the service's staff foster an effective relationship with the home educator to safeguard the educational benefit and welfare of children and young people.

- 4.11. The local authority provides clear guidance to all its education services providers, including our schools, along with child protection policies, and it does this effectively.
- 4.12. The authority ensures there are robust arrangements and procedures in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, radicalisation, slavery, domestic abuse and exploitation.
- 4.13. The authority refers and reports on every incident of alleged professional abuse to a professional strategy meeting promptly and correctly. Every case is initially addressed by the Head of Children's Services and then operational responsibilities are delegated in accordance with an agreed procedure. The procedure is clear and precise and the services work together effectively to secure the credibility of the process.

## **5. Safe recruitment:**

- 5.1. The authority's appointments procedure is based on safe recruitment requirements and is clearly defined in our safe recruitment policy. Every appointment is made after receiving evidence from a previous employer in the form of references, and for posts where a disclosure is required, the employee may not commence in post until the DBS is in place.
- 5.2. A full list of the education service workforce that require a check is available centrally. The DBS percentages of every department are discussed at the Operational Group for Safeguarding Children and Adults providing an opportunity for us to identify any obstacles on a corporate level.
- 5.3. A database is kept of the required checks for the governing body of every school. In Gwynedd, every member of the body is required to have a DBS check.
- 5.4. All candidates for posts with children or adults in Gwynedd are required to answer a standard safeguarding question. The question promotes the status of safeguarding and ensures that everyone who is appointed to work here has an appropriate level of understanding of the field.
- 5.5. The Education Department's current DBS rate is 99.93%, however the department's target is 100%. Thorough processes are in place to work towards this and ensure that everyone renews their DBS promptly. The 0.07% who are without a current DBS check are either in the process of renewing, are off work with long-term sickness, or have been suspended from work.
- 5.6. The performance on DBS checks is a part of the Performance Challenging process and is reported to the Council's Strategic and Operational Safeguarding Panel.

## 6. Training and guidance:

- 6.1. The authority's expectations of the education services providers is captured in the range of training provided. The Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education ensures that the Authority's staff who work with children receive training that equips them to deliver their child protection duties effectively and are able to conduct suitable (level 1) training to the rest of the school's staff. During this academic year, 96% of Gwynedd schools had provided level 1 training in September, with two schools holding it before the end of the Autumn term.
- 6.2. The training programme was changed in September 2023 from a three-year cycle for schools to a two-year cycle, to coincide with best practice in the field.
- 6.3. The Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education has completed 'NSPCC Train the trainer' training and is competent to present training to trainers on safeguarding and child protection. In addition to training designated Safeguarding Persons (level 2) and Governors, she provides standard training to a broad range of services outside schools, including;
- Early Years Education
  - Music Service
  - Taxi Drivers
  - Chaperones
- 6.4. An Annual Safeguarding Survey was held by the Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education in March 2024. It was noted that:
- **92% (↑5%)** of the "Main Safeguarding Persons" in schools had received specific safeguarding training during the past two years.
  - **84% (↑14%)** of Designated Governors in Gwynedd's schools had also received the relevant training for their role in the last two years.
  - **95% (↓2%)** of Gwynedd Schools had introduced Basic Safeguarding Training to all staff before the end of the Autumn Term.
  - **100% (remained at 100%)** of Gwynedd Schools noted that they were confident that all school staff and volunteers know what to do if a child should disclose information on abuse.
- 6.5. During the 2023/24 academic year, 12 level 2 training sessions, along with 9 basic training sessions were offered to Gwynedd schools' staff. In addition, the Designated Lead Officer has held training sessions for Governors, supply teachers, early years staff, the education modernisation team and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) staff.

## **7. MONITORING:**

- 7.1. The Education Department ensures that every school submits Annual Safeguarding Reports to the Governing Body and the content of the reports is verified through quality assurance visits.
- 7.2. The Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education holds quality monitoring visits to verify what was reported on in the Annual Safeguarding Reports to the Governing Body including their day-to-day safeguarding policies and procedures. A report is provided following these visits with recommendations based on the school's improvement plan in the field.
- 7.3. Since April 2023, the Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education has visited 45 schools to verify the safeguarding arrangements, policies and procedures. Every school receives a quality check visit in a two-year cycle. Every school visited complied with the appropriate safeguarding arrangements, and this opinion was confirmed by Estyn visits. Some minor adjustments were suggested in a small number of schools to improve arrangements, but no school needed a follow-up visit.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The members are asked to accept the content of the report.