

REPORT TO THE FORMAL CABINET
(13.09.16)

Cabinet Member: Councillor Mair Rowlands

Subject: Report on the work of the Strategic Safeguarding Children and Adults Panel.

Contact officer: Morwena Edwards

The decision sought/purpose of the report

The Cabinet is asked to accept the report on the work of the Strategic Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Panel.

Introduction

Members will be aware that the responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is one of the most important the Council has to fulfil. For a number of years now, the Council has identified this important field as a priority and has reviewed its corporate arrangements in order to ensure that robust and suitable arrangements are in place.

The Strategic Safeguarding Children and Adults Panel gives specific attention to corporate matters relating to safeguarding. These priorities have also been incorporated within the Council's Strategic Plan.

Arrangements are in place for the Strategic Panel for Safeguarding Children and Adults to report to the Cabinet on the work of the Panel twice a year. As part of that arrangement, this report summarises the work of the Panel for the year 2015 / 16.

Councillor Mair Rowlands chairs the Panel and she is supported by Morwena Edwards, the Statutory Director responsible for the safeguarding field. Councillor Gareth Roberts and Councillor Gareth Thomas are also Panel members due to their responsibilities in the fields of adults and children. In terms of officers, many Heads of Department are members of the Panel (such as Education, Adults, Health and Well-being, Children and Family Support and Corporate Support) as well as the Monitoring Officer.

An Operational Group exists to support the work of the Panel. The purpose of this Group is to implement the work programme and deal with operational matters. The Group's membership includes a safety champion from each of the Council's departments. The Chair of the Operational Group also sits on the Strategic Panel.

The main focus of the above arrangements is to ensure that the Council's corporate safeguarding procedures are effective and robust. The purpose of this report, therefore, is to outline the work of the Strategic Safeguarding Children and Adults Panel. This arrangement offers assurances to the Cabinet regarding the Council's performance in respect of implementing corporate safeguarding arrangements, rather than to report on the authority's performance implementing its statutory functions in terms of safeguarding children and adults.

Other arrangements exist, such as the Regional Safeguarding Boards for Children and Adults, to deal with specialised issues within the field. These Boards are statutory and operate across agencies, with specific and legal responsibilities.

The terms of reference of these safeguarding boards outline their purposes as follows:

North Wales Safeguarding Children Board

(1). The NWSCB will work to achieve the statutory objectives as set out in paragraph 1, section 135 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Bill 2014:

The objectives of a Safeguarding Children Board are—

- (a) to protect children within its area who are experiencing, or are at risk of, abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm, and*
- (b) to prevent children within its area from becoming at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm.*

(2). The North Wales Safeguarding Children Board (NWSCB) will provide the regional strategic direction for the prevention of abuse and neglect of children, and the protection of children who have been abused or neglected safeguarding children and young people across north Wales.

(3). The NWSCB will pursue all avenues to achieve its objectives, including ensuring the preparedness of all partner agencies to achieve the Board's ambitions; making prevention everybody's business; protecting the most vulnerable; creating a hostile environment for offenders and acting to

change the behaviour and understanding of those who abuse or neglect children.

North Wales Safeguarding Adults Board

(1). The North Wales Safeguarding Adults Board (NWSAB) will be proactive in protecting, irrespective of setting, those who are or are at risk of experiencing abuse and neglect and do not have the capacity to protect themselves. We will also actively prevent adults in north Wales who have care and support needs and do not have the capacity to protect themselves, from experiencing abuse and neglect.

The NWSAB will work to achieve the statutory objectives as set out in paragraph 2, section 135 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014.

(2). The North Wales Safeguarding Adults Board (NWSAB) will provide the regional strategic direction for the prevention and the protection of Adults at risk who have been abused or neglected.

(3). The NWSAB will pursue all avenues to achieve its objectives, including ensuring the preparedness of all partner agencies to achieve the Board's ambitions; making prevention everybody's business and protecting the most vulnerable.

Both statutory boards in question, 'The North Wales Safeguarding Children Board' and the 'North Wales Safeguarding Adults Board', have presented a report on their work and this opportunity to append the report for the Cabinet's information is deemed relevant - Appendix 1.

The Council has a responsibility to contribute to these governing arrangements regionally and sub-regionally, and from time to time the Council's corporate arrangements will need to be amended in order to reflect the recommendations of the Regional Boards.

Reasons for recommending the decision

It is believed that the report summarises the work of the Strategic Safeguarding Children and Adults Panel in a correct and fair manner; it is also essential that Cabinet members are aware of the Panel's work on Safeguarding and are satisfied that the Panel has undertaken the required work in a thorough and conscientious manner. The paragraphs below contain a summary of the Panel's work.

The Panel has been supervising three main projects that also received attention through the Council's usual performance management arrangements:

- 1. D1 - Ensure whole Council ownership over the safeguarding field** - The purpose of the project is to ensure that there is corporate ownership of the safeguarding agenda and that effective steps are taken to safeguard children and adults in Gwynedd.
- 2. D2 Safeguarding Children and Young People** The purpose of the project is to continually improve the safeguarding arrangements and culture within the field of children and young people.
- 3. D3 Safeguarding adults** The purpose of this project is to continually improve the safeguarding arrangements and culture within the field of adults.

D1 - Ensure whole Council ownership over the safeguarding field - The work programme was submitted to the Strategic Safeguarding Children and Adults Panel in September and since then the Operational Group has been implementing that work programme. The work programme is being implemented as expected; as with many projects, however, it is likely that the most challenging aspect is that of measuring impact. In an attempt to respond to this, a Task Group has been set up to create a system to measure the impact of adoptions and policy compliance, the work of raising awareness and the impact of the training on safeguarding.

Examples have been gathered of action by front-line staff as a result of an improved understanding of safeguarding over the last two years. The examples show the workforce's ability to identify safeguarding matters and its willingness to take action thereafter. In some cases, front-line staff has made a safeguarding referral which has led to further action. An Awareness Audit was held during the year and the results show an increase in staff awareness levels across the Council in terms of safeguarding issues. 39% of Council staff who have access to an e-mail account responded to the audit and 80% of them expressed that they were aware of the Council's Safeguarding policy; 54% of the elected members responded to the audit and 92% of them expressed that they were aware of the policy. This compares to a response figure of 16%, by both staff and elected members, when the audit was carried out in 2014/15. In addition, the numbers who accept the policy and complete the e-learning modules mean that the message is reaching more staff and across services.

D2 Safeguarding Children and Young People - The North Wales Safeguarding Children Board's regional action plan was submitted to the

Safeguarding Strategic Panel. The Operational Group will consider the corporate implications deriving from the work programme. Raising awareness and creating a local work programme to respond to and ensure compliance with the expectations is likely to be necessary.

Work is also underway to ensure that we as a Council, as much as possible, understand the demand for service and the trends of 'Child Sexual Exploitation' (CSE) in Gwynedd. At present, it is difficult to note the impact on children and young people as implementation of the strategy is still in its early days.

The second part of this project entails the strengthening of safeguarding procedures and culture in the field of Education. A clear work programme has been created and is being implemented. In order to ensure that the schools are completely clear in respect of their responsibilities and that robust procedures and safeguarding culture exist in Gwynedd schools, a Safeguarding Officer has been appointed to the Education Department, and the officer has been in post since September 2015. The fields below have been identified as priority areas:

- Review of Level 1 and Level 2 Child Protection Training
- Review the exemplary policies available to schools in the fields of safeguarding, child protection and physical intervention in the context of national developments and the 'keep the learner safe' guidelines
- Ensure that each Governing Body has adopted the relevant policies
- Every school to have a Safeguarding visit before an inspection
- Agree on one county strategy
- Agree on an Exemplar County Policy
- Raise awareness and training on 'Child Sexual Exploitation'
- Raise awareness and radicalisation training
- Raise awareness of Harmful Sexual Behaviour

D3 Safeguarding adults - The purpose of this project is to continually improve the safeguarding arrangements and culture within the field of adults.

During the year an attempt was also made to continually improve the safeguarding arrangements and culture within the field of adults. Although a number of the recommendations associated with the work programmes have been implemented, more work is yet to be done in order to have a clear reporting procedure which ensures a complete overview of the work. With the Department's Senior Management roles now filled, the Adult, Health and Wellbeing Department is in a position to focus more on fully implementing this project.

During the year, recommendations were received from the Care Inspectorate stating the need to improve our internal arrangements in terms of the implementation of safeguarding in the adults field specifically. The Care Inspectorate's Annual Performance Appraisal Report draws attention to adults safeguarding processes in general and also the Protection of Vulnerable Adults arrangements. The Performance Evaluation Report for 2014/15 was submitted to the Cabinet on 15.12.15, and following this work has been underway to consider effective and sustainable options for the future. The Head's proposal, together with the opinion of the Statutory Director, will be submitted before the Cabinet in due course.

The Panel has agreed to add the "PREVENT" agenda to its remit over the course of the year. This is the Home Office led programme that relates to attempting to prevent individuals from being radicalised.

The performance measures we are gathering in relation to Adults and Children suggest a solid performance again in 2015/16. Of all the adults safeguarding referrals completed during the year, it is evident that we managed to control the risk 97% of the time. We did not manage to control the risk 100% of the time as in 2014/15 as the remaining 3% had refused intervention or had withdrawn application. The performance of this measure is consistent with the rest of Wales (97% in 2015/16), and the family (96% in 2015/16) of councils that are similar to Gwynedd. Specifically regarding children, the risk assessments submitted to case conferences that were considered ones that showed quality when making decisions suggest robust performance again this year - 97% in 2015/16 compared with 98% in 2014/15.

Relevant considerations

Nothing to report.

Next steps and timetable

Nothing to report.

Views of the statutory officers

The Chief Executive:

It is good to note a strong performance in this field once again, as the Council addresses the key challenge of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Of course, to some extent, this work never ends as we must always be vigilant in this respect. Therefore, the Council's corporate focus on this field is important.

The Monitoring Officer:

This report is an appropriate summary of the work of the Strategic Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Panel and addresses the need, in line with the policy, to report to the Cabinet on this annually.

The Head of Finance Department:

I welcome this report as a further opportunity for the Cabinet to receive assurance that the Strategic Safeguarding Panel continues to fulfil its duties. There is a one-off allocation of £60,000 for this area within the 2015-17 Strategic Plan that was adopted by the Full Council on 9 July 2015, and I note that there is no recommendation within this report that relies on receiving a resource in addition to this.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Progress report on the development of the North Wales Safeguarding Boards April 2016.

Background Documents

North Wales Safeguarding Children Board Terms of Reference

North Wales Safeguarding Adults Board Terms of Reference