

**SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION –
SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS IN SCHOOLS**
Draft BRIEF

A	<p><u>What matter is being considered?</u></p> <p>The item 'Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools' was added as an additional item to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee's annual work programme after the annual workshop at the request of scrutiny members.</p> <p>The arrangements were scrutinised at the Committee's meeting on 18 July 2024. There was an informal discussion after the meeting as to the possibility of holding a Task and Finish Group or Scrutiny Investigation into the field. It was concluded that further discussion should take place at the Committee's informal meeting on 5 September 2024 where concern was expressed by members present about the implementation of the safeguarding arrangements within our schools.</p> <p>The Cabinet has approved and adopted a 'Response to Offending Plan' at its meeting on 21 January 2025, which includes investigations and further work to ensure safeguarding arrangements, among other objectives. The response plan looks broadly at a number of different areas, and the scrutiny investigation – safeguarding arrangements in schools is included as one of the work streams in the Plan. The investigation will look at current safeguarding arrangements in schools.</p> <p>Additionally, following positive discussions between the Children’s Commissioner, officers and Cabinet Members in November, and a further meeting between the Chief Executive and the Commissioner on the 9th of December, the Commissioner was invited to contribute to the Response Plan with an offer for her officials to be part of the process to monitor progress on the various work streams. This discussion continues with very positive dialogue.</p>
B	<p><u>Aim of the Investigation</u></p> <p>The main question to address is:</p> <p>‘Are the safeguarding arrangements in the county's schools appropriate and implemented consistently?’</p> <p>It is intended to do this by asking the following key questions:</p> <p><u>Research and establish facts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the requirements including guidance in newsletters and guidelines on 'safeguarding requirements' in schools? <i>(Legal Services)</i> • What are the safeguarding arrangements for schools in Gwynedd? <i>(Council's internal experts in safeguarding, Education Department regarding safeguarding policies)</i> • How does the collaboration between schools/the Education Department and the Children Department work? <i>(Internal council experts – Education Department and Children Department + responses of questionnaire to schools)</i>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the findings/views of Estyn (the regulators in the field) on arrangements in Gwynedd schools? (<i>Authority's arrangements</i>) • Are there examples of good practice nationally, and what would top-quality safeguarding arrangements look like in schools? (i.e. how could good arrangements be ensured). • What do the schools say about their safeguarding arrangements and the support by the authority - are there specific themes? (<i>results of the annual questionnaire from schools</i>) <p><u>Sample of schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the arrangements work in practice in the schools? <p>Focus on the following specific schools: 6 primary schools (of the 78) 3 secondary schools (of the 12) 1 all-through school (of the two) 1 special school (of the two)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the findings/views of Estyn (the regulators in the field) on arrangements in Gwynedd schools? (<i>the arrangements of the schools from the sample</i>) • What do the schools themselves say about their safeguarding arrangements? - (<i>schools' annual questionnaire on safeguarding</i>) <p><u>Visits:</u></p> <p>Talk to Governors (including the designated safeguarding Governor), Head and Staff (including the designated Safeguarding Officer) in each setting.</p>
C	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Background documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2020 - Supplementary guidance for inspecting Safeguarding by Estyn - Estyn Report 2023 - about the authority - Cyngor Gwynedd's Safeguarding Policy - Safeguarding Strategic Panel and Operational Safeguarding Group's Terms of Reference - Safeguarding Children in Gwynedd Schools Model Policy - Reports/Safeguarding Policies for schools visited - Latest reports from Estyn - Annual questionnaire 'schools safeguarding'
CH	<p><u>Gathering Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External expert in the field

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's Internal Experts in the field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Safeguarding officers (Statutory Director of Social Services, Head of Children and Supporting Families Department, Referral Team (Children Department), Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Quality - Children Department; Safeguarding and Wellbeing Quality Leader, Education Protection and Wellbeing Officer - Education Department) o Head of Education Department o Legal Services - In 11 schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Governors (Responsible/designated governors for safeguarding) o Head o Staff member with designated safeguarding responsibility within the school o Staff 		
D	<u>Analysis</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weigh up the evidence gathered from those interviewed - Consider research information and background information 		
DD	<u>Writing the Report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note main findings supported by evidence - Note the recommendations for short-term outputs - Note recommendations and longer term outputs - Discuss and agree upon the draft Report with leaders of the work within the Council - Submit the Final Draft Report to the Scrutiny Committee for observations and endorsement - Publish the Final Report 		
E	<u>Action Plan</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cabinet/Cabinet Member/Education Department to produce an action plan in response to the recommendations - Invite the Cabinet Member for Education and officers to discuss the action plan jointly with the Scrutineers 		
F	<u>Track Progress</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An update to enable the scrutineers to assess progress. 		
FF	<u>TIMETABLE</u>		
	What	Lead	Date
1	Adopt the Brief	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee	13 February 2025
2	The Investigation Members' First Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Context – Cabinet Member for Education, Head of Education Department, Corporate Director of Social Services and Legal 	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	10 March 2025

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	Service - Select schools to include in the sample		
3	Meeting to consider safeguarding arrangements in schools and the Authority's arrangements	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	17 March 2025
4	Meeting to consider: - Views of Estyn on the Authority's arrangements - Good practice - School responses to questions about safeguarding in the annual questionnaire from the Authority	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	31 March 2025
5	Consider reports/information about the schools in the sample and formulate questions for them	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	7 April 2025
6	Visit the schools (11 schools)	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	May / June / July 2025
7	A meeting to discuss the visits	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	August 2025
8	Meeting to draw up findings and draft recommendations	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	September 2025
9	Analysis and Draft Reports	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	October 2025
10	Final Draft Report - Meeting to share the scrutiny investigation's final draft report with the Head of Education and the Cabinet Member	Investigation Members Lead Officer Corporate Director	November 2025
11	Submission of the draft report to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee	Chair of the investigation	11 December 2025