

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

13th March 2018

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rachel Powell
Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Youth, Libraries
and Leisure Services

SUBJECT: Safeguarding Children: Quarterly Update

REPORT FOR: Information

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide cabinet with an update in respect of safeguarding children in Powys for Quarter 3 (October to December) 2017/18. It should be read alongside the inspection report by CSSIW in October 2017 and the information shared with the Minister for Children and Social Services on 9 January 2018 (as required by his First Warning Letter). This can be seen at Appendix 1. The report also includes an update in respect of CYSUR, the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board for Children, whose own update for public and professionals can be found at www.cysur.wales.

2. Inspection follow-up

Our overall position is that, as an organisation, we have been achieving important milestones – both those set for us and those we have planned. It has taken a considerable amount of collective effort. In terms of outcomes, there have been real benefits to some children and families. However, it is still early in the improvement process. Some of our work to date has confirmed that we are seeking to make progress from a very low starting point in important areas such as professional practice and corporate ownership of service priorities,. On the other hand, there have been encouraging signs about our capacity to deliver positive change at pace while dismantling some of the obstacles that could get in our way. We can demonstrate that children's services are firmly established as a political and corporate priority and that good foundations are being laid. Again, this is tempered by realism about how far we need to travel

The Council fully accepted the findings in the inspection report published on 17 October and the subsequent warning notice issued by Welsh Government. It quickly acknowledged the need for urgent and sustained change which will demonstrate our genuine commitment to safeguarding children in Powys. The Council produced on time its improvement plan designed to provide a comprehensive response to the recommendations in the report and also one that matches the scale of the challenges we face.

The plan forms the basis for a three-year programme of change. Our goal is to move Powys in that time from its current position to a place of real strength and exemplary performance. This will require considerable efforts to reshape children's services and this programme will be reflected in a second iteration of the plan, scheduled for submission to CSSIW on 2 February.

The actions set out in the plan will ensure that arrangements for safeguarding children and complying with legislative requirements are robust and represent best practice. Delivering all the changes promptly and effectively will mean that, at the earliest possible time, we can provide the people of Powys and external bodies with realistic reassurance that children are being safeguarded effectively and that children's services are fulfilling all their statutory responsibilities to the highest possible standard.

We recognise that delivering the plan requires the Council to make this our top priority, not only in terms of work to improve children's services but also in taking corporate ownership of key responsibilities (in areas such as prevention, safeguarding, edge of care services, looked after children and leaving care services). The arrangements for accountability set out in the plan and being put into effect demonstrate that the Leader, Cabinet members, the acting Chief Executive, the corporate management team, staff and partners accept a personal and collective responsibility for ensuring that change does happen and that good outcomes are achieved.

Children's services are increasingly able to call on the strength of a wide range of corporate support services and partnerships. We are seeking improvements across the whole Council to ensure that the service can deliver its duties. This includes changes in the way we all work together to support the delivery of front line services. The Improvement Board has been able to consider a comprehensive plan for improving corporate leadership and governance in the Council. The work being done for children's services will provide a template for similar approaches in other areas such as adult social care and education.

Since the inspection, extensive activity has taken place across the Council to secure greater compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards. There has been a rigorous process of self-assessment and we have listened to advice from a range of people who are experts in producing improvement in children's services experiencing severe difficulties. Consequently, Powys has developed a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development, further informed by the helpful recommendations made by the Inspectors and by the work of the Improvement Board. We have acted to:

- strengthen governance arrangements, including the introduction of a very strong independent Improvement Board which is chaired by a former local authority Chief Executive who has experience of leading a council subject to intervention;
- engage the council's whole extended leadership team in this work;
- recruit more social workers (going above establishment in frontline teams) and creating additional in areas such as Powys People Direct, the fostering and adoption services, quality assurance and business management.
- put in place highly experienced senior leadership for children's services and social services as a whole;
- develop plans for reshaping services with our partners;
- improve HR, IT and performance monitoring systems;
- use the expertise and knowledge available within the Improvement Board to support change within key aspects of the improvement plan, such as fieldwork practice and fostering;
- produce a financial plan that incorporates a safe and sustainable budget for children's services;
- agree a Corporate Safeguarding Policy, which sets out the steps that the Council as a whole will take to protect and safeguard children and adults at risk, and set up a Corporate Safeguarding Group chaired by the acting Chief Executive and including both the Cabinet member for Children Services;

- demonstrate renewed commitment to engaging effectively with the Regional Safeguarding Board, the Regional Partnership Board, the Children and Young People's Partnership and structures for national working in areas such as fostering and adoption so that we can benefit more from partnership working and external accountability.

CSSIW undertook further monitoring activity in December. It focused on recent practice through case file reviews and discussions with front line operational staff. They found some early signs of improvement, some evidence of improved practice and many areas where the authority is putting in place new arrangements which have not yet had time to become embedded. They remain concerned about the quality of operational practice, especially on the basis of their case files analysis which generated ongoing concerns about showed a need

This identified signs of improvement but also issues of concern, such as:

- the need for effective accountability (through supervision, management oversight, performance and quality monitoring);
- the quality of operational practice;
- timescales for the completion of assessments and care and support plans;
- frequency of statutory visits for looked after child and those on the child protection register;
- safeguarding practice issues (including use of risk assessments, support to children at risk of child sexual exploitation and multi-agency involvement).

The Council received a letter summarising the findings on 4 January and these concerns were addressed in our review of the improvement plan. The plan will continue to build on the strengths of our staff whose resilience and professionalism in the face of many challenges CSSIW acknowledged in their report. However, it will include too the comprehensive programmes we are developing to improve practice at the frontline, especially in respect of safeguarding. We acknowledge that effective and sustainable change will require far more time and effort. The following areas are seen as being major corporate priorities that we are pursuing.

- greater clarity about accountabilities for social services and recruiting a Director of Social Services as soon as possible;
- better engagement with children, young people and families to encourage co-production in service design and review;
- an improved offer to specific groups, such as young people leaving care and foster carers;
- more inquisitive and effective scrutiny by elected members;
- a workforce strategy for children's services;
- coherent service commissioning strategy including: edge of care/Integrated Family Support Services, placements; support to look after children; front-door responses such as the Information/Advice/Assistance Service.

At the same time, the Social Services Directorate will focus on using additional resources placed in the budget this year and for 2018/19 to improve our capacity for:

- engaging the whole workforce in service redesign;
- facilitating professional development in areas such as Social Services and Well-being Act implementation, specialisation, practice champions, best practice seminars and links to institutions offering professional courses;
- dealing with issues around operational structures, workload management, staffing needs (including urgent recruitment and filling vacancies on a longer-term basis);
- adopting a more robust approach to performance management and supervision; and
- revising processes, policies and procedures.

The improvement plan focuses on ensuring that we have the right conditions to allow our staff to do their very best for children and families across Powys. Working together, we will deliver not

only the priority actions set out in the plan but also sustainable improvement and good outcomes in the lives of our children and young people. We will continue to work closely with CSSIW, Welsh Government, Social Care Wales, regional and other key partners in pursuit of these goals.

In terms of safeguarding, there are a considerable number of actions being taken forward within the current service improvement plan. An assurance mechanism is being implemented as a priority to ensure compliance with legislation, statutory guidance and protocols regarding Looked After Children and children at risk. We are looking to embed performance management and quality assurance arrangements (including scrutiny of service demand and routine auditing of the quality of practice) so that practitioners and managers at all levels have timely, relevant and accurate performance and quality assurance information.

At a political and corporate level, we have established effective systems and structures to monitor and evaluate progress within children's services. The Improvement Board continues to meet monthly meeting and to engage with staff in looking at specific issues (e.g. fostering). There are significant reporting requirements to CSSIW and to Welsh Government, on a monthly and quarterly basis. CSSIW will continue monitoring visits (up to three days each quarter), with the next exercise in March, and there will be another full Children's Services inspection within one year of the last.

We have completed a self- assessment as part of a national inspection by CSSIW in respect of Looked after Children and Care Leavers. Inspectors will follow this up in a range of local authorities across Wales but no decision has been made about where this will happen.

3. Staffing

Staffing arrangements in children's services across Powys have been reviewed and we have a significant number of agency workers at present. This has introduced greater capacity and stability, enabling us to reduce caseloads significantly. However, it is not a sustainable service for meeting the longer-term needs of children and families. There are pressure points in certain teams such as Newtown and Welshpool where a number of staff are leaving and there are high levels of sickness absence. Plans are in place to strengthen these teams with additional agency social workers. Over the past three months, the emphasis in respect of practice and performance has been on ensuring that children and families are visited and assessments completed in a timely manner. We are developing a dashboard of indicators for each team, to help them focus on and monitor their own performance in respect of assessments, visits to children, care planning and reviews and staff supervision.

4. Child Practice Reviews

In this quarter, there have been two new referrals to Cysur for the Board to consider whether or not to conduct a Child Practice Review. There has been a learning event held in respect of Child A, who is the subject of an extended Child Practice Review. As a consequence, specific learning requirements have been embedded within the Children's Services Improvement Plan. The Regional Board has commissioned support to write and develop a regional protocol to complement the new CPR guidance.

5. Quality Assurance

A Quality Assurance Framework has been agreed in November 2017 and this will be implemented across children's services from December. Training will be provided for the staff to ensure they

are familiar with the document. During Quarter 3, a number of case file audits were undertaken by an external auditor. The findings from these audits were disseminated to encourage learning and improvements in practice and service delivery. We will re-audit cases in Quarter 4.

6. Policies & Procedures Sub Group Update

A regional threshold and eligibility document was launched across the region during National Safeguarding Week in November 2017. This is designed to establish a consistent response to children and families in need and to provide the 'right help at the right time'. This policy has been implemented through Child Protection Fora training events across Powys. It is recognised, that further training needs to be held within Children's Service Teams so that all staff are familiar with the document and understand the principles. Training sessions will be available during February and March.

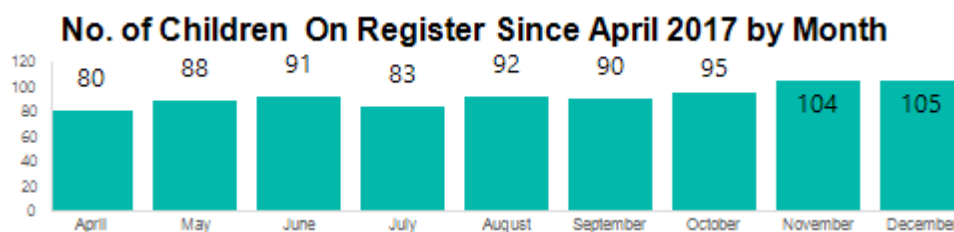
A number of other regional documents are in the process of being completed including protocols for children who are electively home educated, for parents who have identified mental health problems and for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS).

There is a regional action plan for children at risk of sexual exploitation. This needs to be implemented and embedded within the service. In their monitoring visit in December, CSSIW commented on the need for staff to be trained further in all aspects of child sexual exploitation. We are addressing this by relaunching the Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Meetings from 9 February. These meetings will identify those young people who are considered to be at Medium to High Risk within Powys and scrutinise the plans for them. This will also identify any trends, themes and training requirements for children's services and our partner agencies.

7. Trends in Child Protection (CP) registrations

Child Protection Activity

We have had a slight increase in child protection registrations during this period partly because a number of young people were considered to be at risk of child sexual exploitation. Also, more child protection registrations and early signs that the number of children becoming looked after is stabilising would suggest that the child protection registration is being used more effectively to safeguard children in the community.



In October, we introduced additional staff across front line services. Since this time, there has been an increase in the number of care and well-being assessments completed in timescale and a focus on increasing the number of care and well-being plans.

The Authority has plans to establish a Corporate Safeguarding Group for Powys. It will be chaired initially by the Chief Executive and it will have both political representation and representatives from each service area.

Powys People Direct

There has been a consistent referral rate into Powys People Direct. In terms of assessments, there are twice weekly performance meetings held with Team Managers around improving the quality of performance around assessments.

No. of Approaches Referred to Childrens Team	77
No. of Approaches to the Service for Information	27
No. of Approaches to the Service for Advice	12
No. of Approaches to the Service Assistance	31
No. of Approaches to the Service In Progress	0
Childrens - Referrals TAF Team	1
Childrens - Referrals IDS Team	2
Childrens - Care & Well-being Assessments	122
Of These Assessments % Carried Out Within 42 Days	79%
Of These Assessments % Carried Out Within 10 Days	22%

There was only one referral received for the TAF team and two for the Integrated Disability Service in December. Out of 122 assessments received into Children's Services, 79% required an assessment within 42 days and 22% for 10 days.

Child Protection December 2017

Childrens - The Number of Children Added to the Child Protection Register	19
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Childrens - The Number of Children Removed From the Child Protection Register	18
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Childrens - % of Initial Conferences Held in Timescale	70%
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Childrens - % of Initial Core Group Meeting Held in Timescale	68%
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The % of Children on the Child Protection Register that have been Registered Previously	0
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The average length of time on the Child Protection Register for those removed	206 days
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Measure 24 - % of assessments completed for children within statutory timescales

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year To Date
2017/18	53%	48%	78%		61%

Measure 33 - % of children looked after on 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year To Date
2017/18	12%	12%	12%		12%

% of Looked After Children Statutory Visits carried out within timescale

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year To Date
2017/18	37%	48%	45%		44%

% of Child Protection Statutory Visits carried out within timescale

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year To Date
2017/18	42%	37%	49%		42%

% of operational staff who have had Case Supervision on a monthly basis

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year To Date
2017/18	N/A	N/A	25%		

There is an action plan place to improve month on month supervision performance and quality and performance around child protection visits and looked after children's visits.

8. INFORMATION PRESENTED TO CYSUR:

The regional board for Cysur was held on January 25th 2018. Updates were provided regarding the challenge version of the Powys Children's Services Improvement Plan. There is a specific action plan for Quarter 3 and 4 around developing consistent practice in respect of children who are at risk of sexual exploitation and improving the Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation service.

7. Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

Improvement Plan for VAWDASV

Introduction.

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (Wales) 2015 (VAWDASV) places statutory duties on the council and other relevant agencies (such as the Health Board and Fire Service) to take action to reduce the acceptability of all forms of gender-related violence and to improve services for victims and survivors. These issues affect many services and departments within the council and obligations under the Act are corporate in nature. Under the provisions of the Act, there are a number of statutory deadlines with which the Council (along with other relevant authorities) has to comply. Compliance monitoring of is undertaken by the VAWDASV team in the Welsh Government. The Commissioning Manager for VAWDASV, located in the CYPP, seeks to co-ordinate the council's response to the Act.

Regional arrangements

VAWDASV requires new strategic regional partnership arrangements to ensure co-operation and liaison between the statutory and voluntary agencies involved in providing services. In Powys and the West Wales regions, these structures have been aligned with existing safeguarding arrangements to maximise efficiency. The VAWDASV strategic board for Mid and West Wales has started to prepare a Local VAWDASV strategy which requires approval by April 2018. For one element of the VAWDASV agenda, the national training framework, Powys is identified as a region on its own. This raises an issue regarding the regionalisation of Welsh Government VAWDASV funding. Powys would prefer the regional grant to be apportioned to each of the four local authorities but the other three local authorities in our region do not appear to share this view.

Member training is now underway. Training will be provided through 15 front-line presentations on VAWDASV Group 1 for depot staff over the next few months.

10. Regional Quality Assurance Reporting

The Mid & West Wales Safeguarding Children (CYSUR) and Safeguarding Adults' (CWMPAS) Annual Plans for 2017-18 are available on their website (www.cysur.wales).

11. Options Considered / Available

11.1 Not applicable.

12. Preferred Choice and Reasons

12.1 Not applicable.

13. Impact Assessment

13.1 Is an impact assessment required? Yes/No

13.2 If yes is it attached? Yes/No

14. Corporate Improvement Plan

14.1 Safeguarding is everybody's business and links to objectives within the Corporate Improvement plan.

15. Local Member(s)

15.1 Not applicable.

16. Other Front Line Services

Does the recommendation impact on other services run by the Council or on behalf of the Council? Yes/No

If so please provide their comments:-

The Powys Local Safeguarding Group (PLOG) engages with frontline staff/services through its child protection fora. Both the PLOG and PLOGA (for adults) have active training programmes co-ordinated by the local authority and attended by staff from all agencies. The Safeguarding Team give advice and information to managers and staff working with children and adults at risk from all sectors. The PLOG has met recently and it is re-establishing a rigorous set of reporting data which will be used locally to provide information about trends and levels of need for our own use and for submission to the Regional Board.

17. Communications

Have Communications seen a copy of this report? Yes/No

Have they made a comment? If Yes insert here.

18. Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)

18.1 Legal – The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view

18.2 Finance - The Finance Business Partner notes the content of the report.

Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) are provided currently by the independent sector and jointly funded by Dyfed Powys Police and Powys County Council. From March 2018, the IDVA service is being jointly commissioned with the Police on a regional basis across Mid and West Wales and funded from the regional VAWDASV grant. There will be no funding available from this source for individual local authorities. Without such funding and with the loss of grant funding from the region, the Commissioning Manager post for VAWDASV in Powys is at risk. This has been included as part of the bid

for additional resources required to implement the Children’s Services Improvement Plan and included in the Finance Resources Model (FRM).

18.3 Corporate Property (if appropriate)

18.4 HR - HR are fully involved in the workforce stream of the improvement plan and are working with the service to meet its actions in respect of the workforce. HR and the Culture and Leadership Service are working with the senior leadership team in Children’s services to redesign the service and stabilise the workforce.

18.5 ICT (if appropriate)

19. Scrutiny

Has this report been scrutinised? Yes / No?

If Yes what version or date of report has been scrutinised?

Please insert the comments.

What changes have been made since the date of Scrutiny and explain why Scrutiny recommendations have been accepted or rejected?

20. Statutory Officers

20.1 The Head of Financial Services (Acting Section 151 Officer) notes the comments of the Finance Business Partner.

20.2 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: “I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report”.

21. Members’ Interests

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
That Cabinet accepts the safeguarding update in line with its safeguarding responsibilities.	Safeguarding is everyone’s business and this report provides assurance to Cabinet of work that is underway both locally and regionally on important safeguarding matters.

Relevant Policy (ies):	
Within Policy:	Y
Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local	All
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Member(s):	
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Agency representatives
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	N/A

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Background Papers used to prepare Report:

- **Children’s Services First Quarter Improvement Report to the Minister for Children and Social Services**