

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2024

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 18TH JULY, 2024

“C86 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2023/2024 (SCH) (SCRUTINY – ALL) –

The Cabinet Member presented the report, the purpose of which was to update Cabinet on the work that had been undertaken in relation to corporate arrangements for safeguarding across the Council.

With regards Disclosure and Barring Service (DSB) checks, Councillor Williams said that it was a challenge to get 100% of the required checks done across Council and schools staff, but currently stood at 98% and all would be in place for the start of the September term. Members who hold specific roles and responsibilities and required an enhanced DBS check were all in date.

The Leader said that it was interesting to see the results within the data dashboard that showed cross-Council effects rather than just for Social Services.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the work that had been undertaken to improve corporate arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children and adults be noted.
- (2) T H A T Cabinet continue to receive six monthly reports on work carried out to improve Corporate Safeguarding arrangements and the effectiveness of relevant Policies.
- (3) T H A T the report be referred to Healthy Living and Social Care, Learning and Culture, Home and Safe Communities, Governance and Audit and Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To ensure that Cabinet was aware of recent developments in corporate arrangements for safeguarding.
- (2) To allow Cabinet to exercise effective oversight of the key area of corporate working and be assured of effective safeguarding taking place.

(3) To respond to requests that each Scrutiny Committee be provided with update reports.”

Attached as Appendix – Report to Cabinet: 18th July, 2024

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 18 July 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report: 2023/24
Purpose of Report:	To update Cabinet on the work that has been undertaken in relation to corporate arrangements for Safeguarding across the Council.
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health
Responsible Officer:	Director of Social Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This is an issue which affects all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by the Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is corporate responsibility to ensure that there are effective arrangements in place for safeguarding children and adults who require specific Council services. • This Annual Report 2023/24 provides an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding activities taken 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 six monthly reports on work carried out to improve Corporate Safeguarding arrangements and the effectiveness of relevant Policies.
3. That the report is referred to Healthy Living and Social Care, Learning and Culture, Home and Safe Communities, Governance and Audit and Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

Reasons for 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 and be assured of effective safeguarding taking place.
3. To respond to requests that each Scrutiny Committee is provided with update reports.

1. Background

- 1.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is the annual report that brings together safeguarding activity undertaken by the Social Services, Learning and Skills, Managing Directors Office and Resources and Environment and Housing This provides a more holistic representation of safeguarding activity across the Council. The report provides a composite of activity across the directorates. Scrutiny Committees should particularly consider the elements of the report in line with their portfolio areas.
- 1.2 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 was implemented in April 2016. This has brought about changes in particular relating to the introduction of a 'Duty to Report' which has meant a revision of the corporate safeguarding policy to bring staff's attention to this duty.
- 1.3 The 'Working Together to Safeguard People Guidance' under Part 7 of the Act provides guidance on corporate safeguarding for the Council. Guidance on handling individual cases (Volumes 5 and 6) to protect children and adults at risk was launched in 2017. 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.
- 1.4 A set of new national safeguarding procedures, Wales Safeguarding Procedures were launched in November 2019. They detail the essential roles and responsibilities for practitioners to ensure that they safeguard children and adults who are at risk of abuse and neglect. The procedures are designed to standardise safeguarding practice across all of Wales and between agencies.

These procedures support Local Authorities in fulfilling their statutory roles and functions to adults and children at risk.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** An annual report is attached at Appendix 1 which highlights the work completed across the Council to make improvements to our Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.
- 2.2** HR have implemented an electronic transfer system for DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks. This has sped up the DBS checking process which forms part of the pre-employment checks. The system provides an electronic portal where applicants can apply for a DBS check online, allow checks to be approved and tracked by the Council, and the disclosure outcome will be available in most cases within 24/48 hours.
- 2.3** During 2022/23 a Cabinet decision was made that all Elected Members upon taking up appointment complete a basic Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and that some Members, who hold specific roles and responsibilities, complete an enhanced DBS check. Elected Members of Cabinet, the Healthy Living and Social Care, Homes and Safe Communities, Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committees and Members who are in receipt of a Senior Salary are amongst these.
- 2.4** The Social Services Directorate has experienced an ongoing and sustained increase within safeguarding activity such as Section 5 Allegations Against Practitioners; Child Protection Reports and Registrations; Adult Safeguarding Reports.
- 2.5** The Corporate Safeguarding Group are developing a data dashboard across key areas of safeguarding activity across all directorates.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Long term – Considering ability across Directorates to meet long-term demands and horizon scanning in relation to our safeguarding responsibilities.
- 3.2** Integration – Considering how the public body’s well-being objectives may impact upon each other of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
- 3.3** Involvement – Ensuring voices of children and adult at risk are acknowledged and respected in all our interactions and service planning.
- 3.4** Collaboration – Cross Directorate ownership, accountability and understanding of our safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no Climate Change and Nature Implications as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** 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 result the Council is reviewing processes to ensure there is clarity provided for people raising concerns and who responds to these enquiries/notifications about individuals who are considered 'at risk', but are not known or eligible for our statutory services. Social Services will continue to review the staffing numbers and structure required in order to continue to be able to meet this increased demand.
- 5.2** The other financial implication of note is the resource that will be required to implement some areas of the Corporate Safeguarding Work Plan which directorates will need to manage within their existing budgets.

Employment

- 5.3** 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.
- 5.4** 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).
- 5.5** In relation to DBS arrangements, key elements of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 have been implemented.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.6** Legislation requires the Local Authority to make arrangements for ensuring the function to discharge their duties, having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and codes of practice issued under the Act, makes it clear that Safeguarding Children and Adults at risk of abuse and neglect is everyone's responsibility.
- 5.7** 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.

6. Background Papers

Reports to Cabinet: [7th September 2023](#); [9th June 2022](#); [7th June 2021](#); [29th July 2019](#).

Appendix One

Corporate Safeguarding Vale of Glamorgan Council

Annual Report

April 2023 – March 2024



Cyngor Bro Morgannwg
Vale of Glamorgan Council

The purpose of this report is to reflect on safeguarding activity during 2023/24 across the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The report outlines key activities on a corporate basis for the following:

Section A: Social Services

Section B: Learning and Skills

Section C: Managing Director and Resources (Safer Recruitment)

Section D: Environment and Housing (Housing; Community Safety; Shared Regulatory Services)



Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Social Services

A. Safeguarding in Social Services

This section of the report brings together key safeguarding activity that has taken place across the three Divisions of the Social Services Directorate during the period **April 2023 – March 2024**.

The following activities will be addressed in turn:

- Child Protection (Conferences & Registration)
- Adult Safeguarding (Adults at Risk)
- Allegations against Professionals and Those in Positions of Trust – Section 5 Wales Safeguarding Procedures
- Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board (includes information in relation to Adult and Child Practice Reviews)

Children's Safeguarding & Review : Child Protection

Child Protection Conferences are multi-agency meetings that include children and their parents/caregivers and take place when Child Protection (S.47 of the Children

Act 1989) enquiries have identified that a child is at continued risk of harm. The S.47 enquiries will have been conducted by a social worker within the children and young people’s team alongside an assessment. These enquiries and subsequent outcomes will have been informed by multi-agency discussion and consideration of the child’s individual circumstances in the context of their wider family.

The child protection conference functions, chairing roles and responsibilities, are delivered by the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division of Social Services. It has a function that is independent of Children’s Services, although there is close collaboration and communication. This enables a level of independence and scrutiny in ensuring that effective practice is taking place, to enable children’s voices to be heard and this reflects good outcomes for children and their families. It also ensures that appropriate and effective risk management is evident for those children deemed to be at most risk within our communities.

The information below relates to performance data in relation to section 47 enquiries and child protection conferences for 2023/34.

Strategy Meetings held during the year that progressed to Section 47 enquiries	Section 47 enquiries completed during the year that progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference	Children during the year not deemed to be at risk of significant harm at child protection conference but still have need for Care and Support	Initial child protection conferences held during the collection year that were held within statutory timescales	Children on the Child Protection Register on 31 March	Children on the Child Protection Register during the collection year	Days on the child protection register for children who were removed from the register during the year	Pre-birth child protection conferences convened during the year
546	213	29	145	125	271	34,274	13

145 initial child protection conferences were held during this period, resulting in 116 becoming subject to registration and child protection planning.

As of 31st March 2024 they were 125 children subject to child protection registration and planning.

The decision for a child to be subject to registration and child protection planning indicates that they have been identified as being at risk of continued significant harm. There are more children than conferences taking place as the figures reflect sibling groups of children. Not all conferences result in the child becoming subject of registration, in some cases it may be decided that the child is not at continuing risk of significant harm and there may be care and support needs. The decision for registration and what category of registration is required, is determined within the

child protection conference and considered within the parameters of the risks being identified.

The categories of risk for registration are:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional or Psychological Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Financial Abuse
- Neglect

Children can be recorded as being at risk of abuse, neglect or harm under one, or more of these categories.

There has been a significant rise in the number of children subject to child protection planning during 2023/34. At the end of March 2023, 88 children were subject to child protection registration, planning and review with this number increasing to 125 as of end March 2024. We are aware that there has been increased demand at the front door of our children and young people services division and this could lead to increased numbers of children becoming subject to registration and Child Protection planning.

Adult Safeguarding - Adults at Risk

Safeguarding duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) apply to adult protection, as safeguarding is preventative as well as protective. Safeguarding is wider than the essential focus on those most at risk or needing protection from abuse, neglect and harm. Safeguarding includes ensuring the provision of safe and effective care; protecting from abuse, neglect and harm; optimising well-being, voice, choice and control, and preventing impairment of health and development.

Safeguarding is everyone's business. However, the Act sets out particular duties for Local Authorities and relevant partner agencies e.g., Health and Police, working with adults. The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act, places a duty to report an "adult at risk" for all relevant partners to the Local Authority.


There is a duty for a Local Authority to make enquiries if it has reasonable cause to suspect that a person within its area (whether or not ordinarily resident there) is an adult at risk.

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that an adult is at risk of abuse or neglect the Local Authority has a duty to undertake section 126 enquiries. These enquiries should normally be completed within seven days and enquiries should be made to determine what actions may be required to support the adult at risk

and any ongoing protection planning that may be required. These enquiries should be person centred and ensure that the adult is consulted and spoken with to determine their understanding of the situation and any support needs they may have as well as considering potential risks.

The duties placed on the Local Authority by the SSWBA, have resulted in a significant increase in the number of safeguarding enquiries being undertaken. This has resulted in increased numbers of citizens coming to the attention of Social Services, where historically they would not have

The information below demonstrates data in relation to key areas of adult safeguarding activity:

Number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect reported during the year	Number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect reported more than once for the same category of abuse or neglect during the year	Number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect reported for different categories of abuse or neglect during the year	Number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during the year	Number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk where it is necessary for enquiries	Enquiry Compliance 	Number of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse	Number of criminal investigations that concluded during the year 
636	97	85	825	300	99%	296	10

The Adult Safeguarding Team (Vale of Glamorgan Council) received **825** Safeguarding reports between April 2023 – March 2024. The table below details number of reports received in previous years:

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
619	602	816	823	825

The data above demonstrates that the previous year-on-year increases of reporting adults at risk has stabilised over the last three years. It is evident that the introduction of the Social Services Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the subsequent Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2020) has resulted in an increased awareness and understanding of the duty to report and the need to ensure appropriate safeguarding of those adults at risk.

Of the **825** adult safeguarding reports 300 proceeded to enquiry and of those **99%** were completed within the seven-working day time scale, this is a significant improvement on previous years performance which was 72%.

It should be noted that the number of reports that progressed to seven-day enquiries has decreased. This can be attributed to the team screening the reports and identifying other appropriate supports or responses, other than requiring a

safeguarding response. This results in timely, appropriate safeguarding responses to those who require it.

The information below outlines the types of abuse being reported and age ranges of those adults at risk where abuse or neglect is being reported:

The total number of reports received during the collection year where it was alleged that there was abuse under the primary category of:

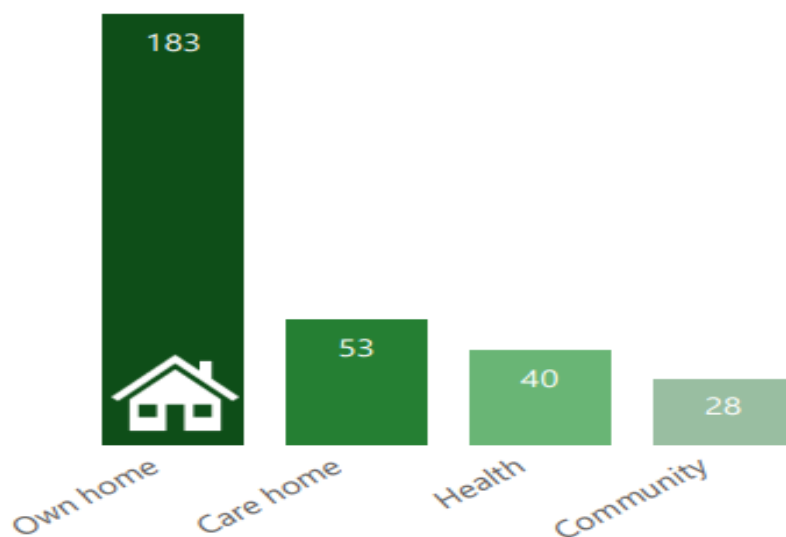
Age Group	Emotional or Psychological abuse	Financial abuse	Neglect	Physical abuse	Sexual abuse	Total
18-24	53	27	44	52	33	209
25-34	34	13	15	28	12	102
35-44	19	10	18	20	4	71
45-54	34	28	28	31	9	130
55-64	33	24	29	21	7	114
65-74	38	29	47	33	4	151
75-84	44	33	54	51	4	186
85 and over	35	24	77	47	7	190
Total	290	188	312	283	80	1153

The highest three areas included (from highest to lowest) Neglect, Physical and Emotional / Psychological abuse, although it should be noted that individuals could experience more than one type of abuse.

It is of note that the largest reported area of abuse was in relation to neglect within the 85 and over category. We are currently undertaking a review of this to understand in more detail these reports and subsequent actions that took place.

The graphs below demonstrate the location/environment where the alleged abuse took place

Place alleged abuse or neglect occurred:



1. The majority of the abuse is reported as taking place in the individuals own home.

Safeguarding Allegations against Professionals / Positions of Trust (Section 5)

Early 2020 saw the implementation of a new set of national safeguarding procedures, Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019). A significant feature of these procedures has been the introduction of a combined approach (Adults & Children) to Safeguarding Allegations against Practitioners and those in Positions of Trust, widely referred to as Section 5 concerns. The adult and children safeguarding teams have now adopted these procedures and adopted the combined approach to responding to allegations against practitioners.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) has a duty to manage allegations and concerns about any person whose work/volunteering (paid or unpaid) brings them into contact with children or adults at risk. The Operational Manager for Safeguarding fulfils the LADO role for the Vale of Glamorgan Council with some duties being delegated to the Childrens and Adult Safeguarding Team Managers.

Managing cases under these procedures applies to a wider range of allegations than those in which there is reasonable cause to believe a child or adult at risk is suffering or is likely to suffer harm. It also applies to concerns that might indicate that a person is unsuitable to continue to work with children or adults at risk in their present position or in any capacity. It should be used in all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children or adults at risk has:

Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or adult at risk.
May have committed a criminal offence against a child or adult at risk or that has a direct impact on the child or adult at risk.
Behaved towards a child, children or adults at risk, in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children and/or adults.

There are a number of considerations when allegations have been made, the LADO (or delegated officer for safeguarding) will co-ordinate the multi-agency meetings and monitor the process if there are any investigations taking place i.e. criminal investigations and ensure that during this process there is appropriate risk management and support plan in place.

For all allegations a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the allegation was investigated is completed.

The Vale of Glamorgan council received **126** concerns in relation to practitioners working with both Children and Adults at Risk (in paid and voluntary positions) between April 2023 to March 2024. There has been a year-on-year increase in the number of reports being made. The increase in reports is being reflected across Wales. This is thought to be due to increased understanding and awareness of employers understanding their responsibility to report to LADOs when staff members have allegations made against them. This is a positive position in terms of increased awareness and understanding, but is having an impact on the resources and capacity within the safeguarding teams. As a consequence we are currently reviewing the Safeguarding & Review team roles and structure to determine if there is any capacity within our current resources.

Of those concerns **68** were predominately working with Children and **58** were working with Adults at Risk.

Of the **68** referrals received in relation to Practitioners working with children **60** progressed to a strategy discussion with the police and other relevant agencies e.g. Health/Education/Childrens Services. **51** of these went on through the allegations process and strategy meetings took place.

The reason for the concern not progressing to strategy meeting was either because the individual was not in a role where they were directly in post to work with Children or Adults at Risk, or it was a lower-level concern that could be managed via the employee's own HR procedures.

ADULT WORKFORCE

Most reported concerns in relation to those working with Adults at Risk were made by the Police, and in relation to those working with Children referrals were predominantly made by the Police (either directly or through Children's & Young People's services), this is to be expected as the incidents referred usually had already come to the attention of the Police. The second largest referrer came from

education settings predominately in relation to alleged incidents that had occurred in the workplace (School).

The concerns related to Domestic Violence, driving offences ('drink and drug driving'), physical and sexual assaults of Adults, Adults at Risk and children and downloading indecent images of children.

41% of Carer/ Support Worker working with Adults at Risk were referred as their child/ren were subject to Section 47 enquiries or were on the Child Protection register.

In respect of practitioner's working with both Children and Adults at Risk Education has the highest number of referrals that progressed to strategy meeting.

In this time period, across both Children and Adults at Risk **94** strategy discussion's and **110** strategy meetings have taken place.

Most of the concerns reported were made by the Police (either directly or through Children & Young People's services), this is to be expected as the incidents referred usually had already come to the attention of the Police. The second largest referrer was education settings.

The concerns related to Domestic violence, driving offences ('drink driving'), physical and sexual assaults of Adults, Adults at Risk and Children.

10 of the referrals were subject to ongoing Police investigation.

The data showed that the highest number of concerns raised were in relation to practitioners in education setting's (including teachers and learning support assistants) of incidents that occurred whilst in the workplace.

Domestic violence continues to be widespread across all types of employment, there is the potential that this could increase in the coming year due to the cost-of-living crisis and the added pressure and strains this could add to families.

The team are focusing on ensuring that the individual who has had an allegation made against them are appropriately supported during the process and have information to enable them to understand this process. It is the responsibility of the employer to have an identified support person available and provide information to the individual, this includes when outcomes have been reached and the reasons for the determinations being made.

The Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding Boards ensure that effective arrangements are in place to protect children within the region who are at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. The Board also ensures appropriate arrangements are in place to protect adults within its area who have needs for care and support (whether or not a local authority is meeting any of those needs) and are experiencing, or are at risk of, abuse or neglect. The Board aims to prevent those adults within its area, from becoming at risk of abuse and neglect.

To achieve these aims the Boards:

- Promote the development of strategies to prevent risk effectively.
- Ensure that agencies are able to challenge themselves and partners in delivering their individual and shared accountability for safeguarding effectively.
- Ensure that the voice of the person is heard and recognised in its deliberations.
- Promote a culture of critical analysis and review to ensure that lessons are learned when people suffer harm because of gaps in policy, systems or practice.

The Director of Social Services, Vale of Glamorgan is the co-chair of the Regional Safeguarding Board. Officers from across the Vale of Glamorgan are represented at the Regional Safeguarding Boards and continue to provide consistent participation and engagement across all areas of work. This ensures there is a shared ownership, accountability and understanding of safeguarding priorities across the region.

The [Cardiff and Vale RSB Annual Plan 2023-24](#) sets out the key priorities for the Board during the 2022/23 financial year.

Practice Reviews

Multi-agency practice reviews are undertaken where circumstances of a significant incident where abuse or neglect of a child or adult at risk is known or suspected.

The criteria for practice reviews are laid down in the Safeguarding Boards (Functions and Procedures) (Wales) Regulations 2015. The arrangements came into force from 6 April 2016.

The overall purpose of practice reviews is to promote a positive culture of multi-agency learning and reviewing in local areas, for which Regional Boards and partner agencies hold responsibility. To achieve this, it sets in place a foundation for learning together by professionals from different agencies and, in those circumstances where a more

formal review is required when there are serious incidents resulting from abuse or neglect, there is a system of multi-agency, concise and extended practice reviews.

During 2023/24 there were no Adult Practice Reviews in relation to Vale of Glamorgan Citizens. There was one published Child Practice Review in relation to a child known to Vale of Glamorgan services, this can be [accessed here](#) along with a 7-minute briefing providing snapshot of the circumstances, learning and recommendations from this review .

The review was undertaken by an independent chair and reviewer, with the OM for Safeguarding & Service Outcomes undertaking the panel member role.

The learning and associated recommendations/action plan are monitored and reviewed within a number of strategic and operational forums across the local authority.



Dysgu a Sgiliau Learning and Skills

B. Safeguarding in Learning and Skills

Safeguarding activity in the Learning and Skills Directorate continues to evolve in line with requirements of national, regional and local developments in legislation, guidance and policy.

The Directorate Management Team (DMT) consistently monitors operational safeguarding practice across the Directorate, this includes a standing safeguarding agenda item at monthly DMT meetings that has a particular focus on safer recruitment, safeguarding training and allegations against employees and volunteers. Since April 2023 the compliance rate for adherence to the Safer Recruitment policy has been 100% month on month by schools and Learning & Skills Directorate, apart from 1 breach in April, June and November 2023 which was immediately recognised and support put in place for the school in question. Between April 2023 and August 2023 (Academic year 22-23) there were 5 referrals made under Section 5 Wales Safeguarding Procedures (allegations of professional concern). During the academic year 23-24 to date there has been 27 referrals. This academic year referrals breakdown further by role, examples of this being that 9 of the allegations were made against teachers, 5 made against LSA's and a further 13 against supply Teachers / LSA's, school staff and bus drivers.

Directorate safeguarding policies, guidance and standard forms are available to support safeguarding practice for all employees and volunteers in the Directorate, Schools, Youth Service, Libraries and Adult Community Learning (ACL) for consistency in practice across the Directorate. All Vale schools have in place a current revised December 2022 Model Safeguarding Policy provided by the Directorate that is consistent with Welsh Government guidance. A further revision is under way at this time which further considers updates to the Welsh Government Keeping Learners Safe guidance and is anticipated for publication in September 2024.

February 2024 saw the publication of the reviewed Vale of Glamorgan Trans Inclusion Schools toolkit, a guide to supporting transgender and gender variant children and young people in school. Providing information, guidance and support to education professionals, learners and parents.

With the publication in January 2024 of the Welsh Government Peer-on-peer sexual harassment in education settings: action plan to prevent and respond to peer-on-peer sexual harassment in education settings, the Directorate is ensuring that the recommendations outlined at Local Authority level and school level are implemented with key workstreams ensuring that education settings adopt a whole-system approach to create safe learning environments to prevent peer-on-peer sexual harassment. This includes:

- developing the knowledge, skills and values to identify what is and is not appropriate sexual behaviour.
- understanding the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships
- providing safe supportive environments where learners can grow and develop pro-social norms and values.
- improving data collection around bullying and prejudice incidents.
- awareness raising and staff confidence building around such topics as tackling school based sexually harmful behaviour.

Mandatory annual safeguarding training is delivered consistently across the Directorate to standards set by Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding Board (RSB) and all employees and volunteers are expected to comply with statutory and local guidance in relation to safeguarding children and adults. An iDev Level 1 safeguarding package continues to be rolled out to all school and Directorate staff. This ensures a consistent and standardised approach to safeguarding training is maintained.

Level Two training for Dedicated Safeguarding Person (DSPs) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Person (DDSPs) is delivered on-line numerous times each academic term to maximise the opportunities for attendance. All School & Directorate-based staff, including DSPs now have access to iDev accounts that will facilitate much easier maintenance of safeguarding training and the ability to monitor in real time training compliance rates of all staff.

Compliance with annual safeguarding training:

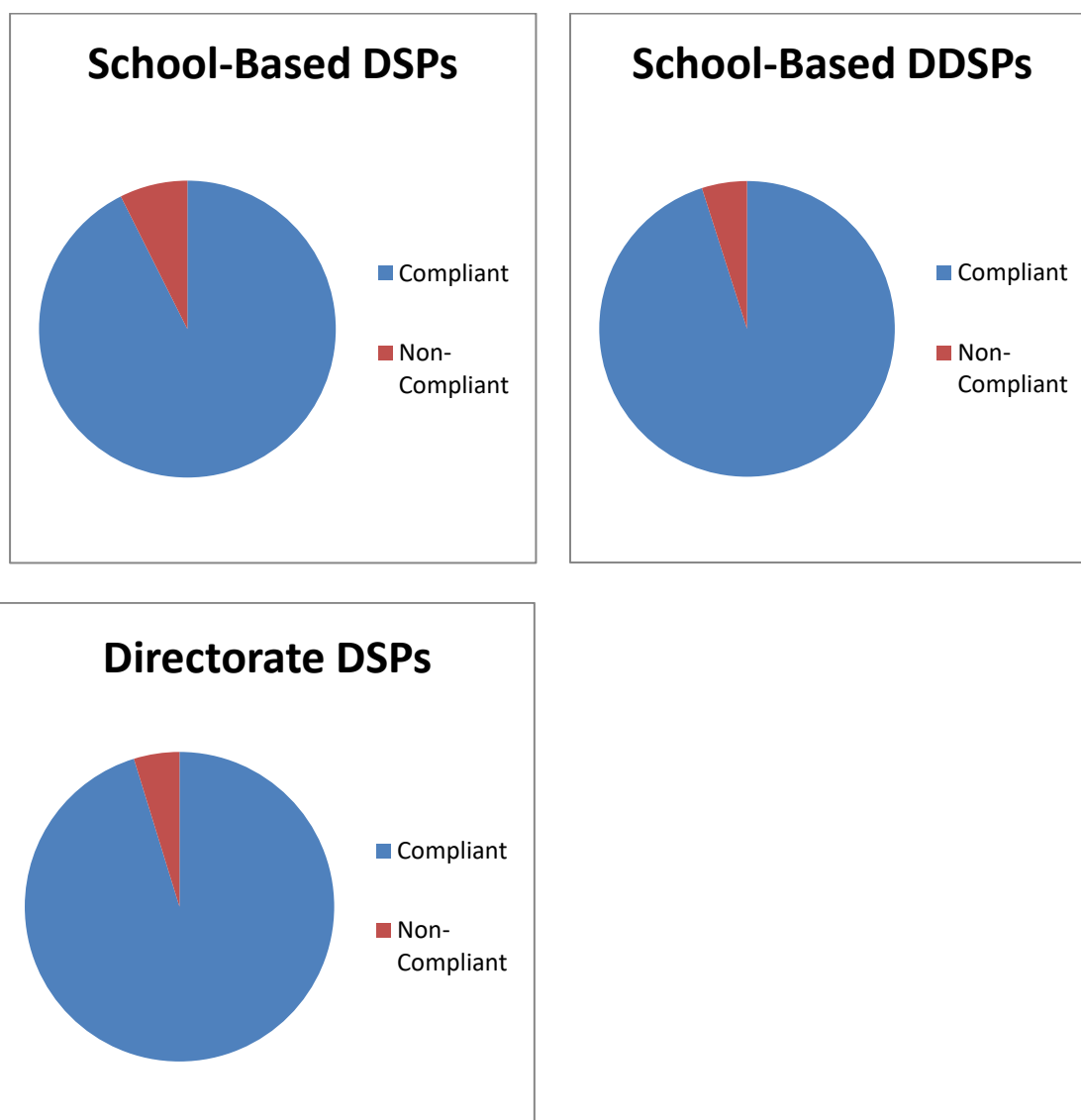
National guidance prescribes that safeguarding training for education staff at all levels should take place on a 3 yearly basis. In the Vale of Glamorgan, we consider the importance of this training with regular updates will be carried out on an annual basis, to try to ensure the highest levels of competency and confidence in our front-line staff.

School-based DSPs, 50 of the 54 are in compliance.

School based DDSPs, 77 of the 81 are in compliance

Directorate based DSPs, 20 out of 21 are in compliance.

The school-based staff that are not currently compliant can be accounted for through long-term sickness / absence from the workplace. Those not compliant are all booked on to training courses during summer term.



DSPs, DDSPs, Designated Safeguarding Governors (DSGs) and other staff have access to a bespoke programme of subject-specific safeguarding training delivered termly, with content developed in response to national, regional and local priorities. Current training priorities for the Learning and Skills Directorate include, Radicalisation and Extremism, Sexually Harmful Behaviour, Sexual Harassment and LGBTQ+ discrimination.

Schools continue to develop a recognised Safeguarding Team that includes DSP, DDSP and DSG. Schools are encouraged to include their Designated Safeguarding Governor in development of the Safeguarding Self Evaluation Report (SER), use of

the safeguarding self-evaluation Audit Tool and Guidance that accompanies Keeping learners safe, and the review of policies and compliance with training, along with safer recruitment and in monitoring the general effectiveness of safeguarding practice within the school.

The Directorate Safeguarding Officer in partnership with the Governor Support Unit, offer termly bespoke training for those in the Designated Safeguarding Governor (DSG) role. All training is evaluated and reviewed to facilitate regular development and ensure that safeguarding training is fit for purpose and meets need. At this time 49 out of our 54 DSGs have received this training with the remaining 5 due to take part in summer 2023 training. All other governors are directed to and access HWB e-learning safeguarding modules, compliance is monitored by schools. From Autumn 2023 schools will be required to provide a termly update on Governor training compliance.

The Directorate continues to demonstrate regulatory compliance in relation to licensing children in employment and entertainment, including the licensing of chaperones. The Directorate continues to participate in national discussions to achieve consistency in licensing practice across local authorities in Wales. The Inclusion Manager and dedicated CIEE licensing and data officer are liaising closely with colleagues in Cardiff to ensure greater parity of approach for this area and have revised processes accordingly.

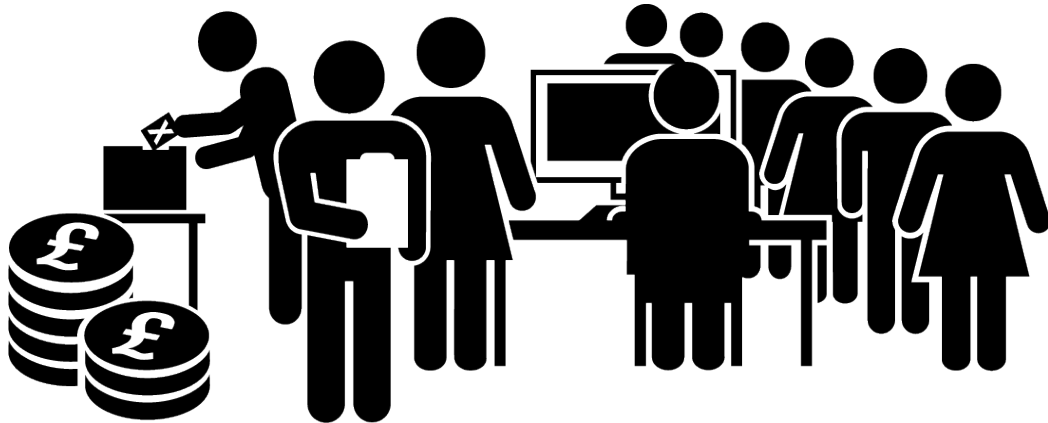
The Safeguarding Officer and other senior officers continue to represent the Directorate at the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan RSB and on all RSB sub-groups, thereby strengthening working relationships with partner agencies.

The Safeguarding Officer also contributes to the Wales Safeguarding in Education Group and to national and regional multi-agency working groups in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation, Modern Slavery / Human Trafficking, Children in Employment and Entertainment and Elective Home Education. The Safeguarding Officer also participates in local multi-agency activity such as the Cohesion and Engagement Steering Group, VAWDA Steering Group and Regional Channel Panel. The Safeguarding Officer continues to participate in national groups working on revised editions of key All-Wales safeguarding and child protection guidance documents. Participation in national and local groups ensures that the Directorate has access to up-to-date safeguarding information and is able to influence the development of national and local strategies and guidance. The safeguarding officer assists in training staff as part of the national roll-out programme for VAWDASV for group 2 and group 3 champions.

The Vale of Glamorgan domestic abuse Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) continues to develop and refine its processes and the participation of a Learning and Skills officer enables appropriate information-sharing to develop robust support for children experiencing the effects of domestic abuse. Schools respond promptly and appropriately to requests for information. The Directorate and Vale schools continue to receive Police Protection Notifications (PPNs) from South Wales Police, which significantly enhance knowledge of the child's lived experience in relation to domestic and missing person incidents and allow the development of appropriate support for the relevant child.



The Safeguarding Officer also liaises with senior officers with responsibility for wellbeing and nurture, to ensure that all activity relating to child welfare is linked and supported. The Directorate continues to review the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies and recognises the impact of unresolved bullying on wellbeing outcomes for children.



Adnoddau Corfforaethol Corporate Resources

C. Corporate Resources Directorate – Safe Recruitment

The Corporate Resources Directorate report outlines ongoing progress in relation to compliance with the Council’s Safer Recruitment Policy for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 in comparison to the same period in the previous year.

Overall Compliance – April 2023 to March 2024 (Schools and Corporate Services)

1. Compliance with the policy for April 2023 to March 2024 for all appointments was 99% (7 breaches), compared to 99% (6 breaches) from the same reporting period last year (April 2022 to March 2023). A full breakdown of figures can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Compliance Rates for Corporate and Schools New Starters

Month	Number of new starters under Safer Recruitment	Number of employees with all documentation or RA in place	April 2023 to March 2024	April 2022 to March 2023
April	44	43	100%	98%
May	30	30	96%	100%
June	22	21	98%	95%
July	27	26	100%	96%
Aug	21	21	100%	100%
Sept	198	198	100%	100%
Oct	25	25	97%	100%
Nov	37	36	94%	97%
Dec	13	13	100%	100%
Jan	67	64	100%	96%
Feb	22	22	100%	100%
Mar	21	21	100%	100%
Total	527	520	99%	99%

Schools

1. Compliance with the policy for April 2023 to March 2024 for school appointments was 98%, which has remained the same as the reporting period last year (98%).
2. Members will note that for the month of September 2023 (which represents the highest recruitment activity within the school academic year), compliance was 100% which is again, remained the same as the reporting period last year September 2022 (100%). The number of new starters increased slightly from 175 in September 2022 in comparison to 181 in 2023.
3. The current escalation process requires a discussion with the Head Teacher regarding non-compliance and monitoring of repeated non-compliance by particular schools throughout the year.

4. A full breakdown of compliance rates for schools and actual figures can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Compliance Rates for Schools New Starters

Month	Number of new starters under Safer Recruitment	Number of employees with all documentation or RA in place	April 2023 to March 2024	April 2022 to March 2023
April	22	21	95%	100%
May	19	19	100%	94%
June	12	11	92%	97%
July	12	11	92%	100%
Aug	3	3	100%	100%
Sept	181	181	100%	100%
Oct	15	15	100%	92%
Nov	18	17	94%	89%
Dec	1	1	100%	100%
Jan	53	50	94%	100%
Feb	15	15	100%	100%
Mar	11	11	100%	100%
Total	362	355	98%	98%

Corporate

5. The compliance rate for Corporate Services for April 2023 to March 2024 was 100%, which has remained the same as the reporting period last year (100%).
6. A full breakdown of compliance rates and actual figures can be found in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Compliance Rates for Corporate New Starters

Month	Number of new starters under Safer Recruitment	Number of employees with all documentation or RA in place	April 2023 to March 2024	April 2022 to March 2023
April	22	22	100%	100%
May	11	11	100%	100%
June	10	10	100%	100%
July	15	15	100%	100%
Aug	18	18	100%	100%
Sept	17	17	100%	100%
Oct	10	10	100%	100%
Nov	19	19	100%	100%
Dec	12	12	100%	100%
Jan	14	14	100%	100%
Feb	7	7	100%	100%
Mar	10	10	100%	100%
Total	165	165	100%	100%

Return of Risk Assessments (Schools and Corporate Services)

7. Human Resources continue to monitor the return of risk assessments for both Schools and Corporate services. Over the reporting period of April 2023 to March 2024, 7 new starters commenced employment without all the required checks in place or a signed risk assessment as allowed for by the policy.

On-going measures

8. The e-learning facility is available to all Vale of Glamorgan Council employees within corporate Directorates who have access to the Council's StaffNet through the new iDev system. Currently all Schools have access to the Council's StaffNet to enable access the Safer Recruitment and DBS policy and supporting documentation.
9. The Safer Recruitment escalation process requires Human Resources to identify and monitor outstanding documentation at the 8th, 10th and 12th calendar week following the employee taking up employment. Discussions are then held with the Head Teacher who in turn meets with the member of staff and confirms the outcome with Human Resources. The Directorate Safeguarding Officer for Learning and Skills is also informed at the 8th week. Human Resources continue to monitor weekly and also inform the Chair of Governors and Safeguarding Governor if the documentation remains outstanding at the 10th week and 12th week. At the time of reporting there are no schools appointments and one corporate appointment at the 8th / 10th / 12th week.
10. DBS Checks are undertaken through the e-Bulk system introduced in 2019 and this increases the speed of pre-employment checks. The disclosure outcome will be available in the majority of cases within 24/48 hours.
11. Communication with relevant Head Teachers where issues are identified remains in place as well as when necessary including the subject on the agenda for Head Teacher meetings, Head Teacher Steering group meetings and Designated Senior Person for child protection DSP Forum meetings attended by school safeguarding leads.
12. HR continue to look at ways to ensure applicants and Head Teachers are made aware of outstanding checks – a regular message will continue be sent to both parties to ensure all checks are in place.
13. In addition, compliance of the policy is discussed at each corporate safeguarding group meeting to continually review the effectiveness of the policy.

Conclusion

14. Compliance with the Safer Recruitment Policy remains slightly less than the expected 100% compliance, however, with only 7 breaches, this remains consistent with last year's figures and is a significant improvement on previous year's compliance.
15. The measures outlined in this report will need to continue to be applied to support this.
16. Compliance in corporate services remains high and this will need to remain closely monitored going forward to ensure this trend continues.



D. ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING (includes Housing; Safer Vale; VAWDASV; Shared Regulatory Services)

HOUSING

Safeguarding remains a key priority for the Housing team and a number of activities and events have taken place over the last 12 months to strengthen processes and raise awareness amongst staff, tenants and partners. The Departmental Management team monitors any safeguarding concerns regularly and these are fed down through team meetings to front line staff. Safeguarding is also standard agenda item at staff meetings and monthly 1-1s.

All Housing staff receive regular training in Safeguarding and related themes.

Staff from Housing are represented on the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board and the Local Safeguarding Operational Group as well as several sub groups looking at issues around Exploitation and Child and Adult Practise Reviews, and Polices, Procedures and Practice. Members of the Housing team have now been trained to be able to undertake Child and Adult Practise Reviews, acting as the Chair or Reviewer and have since been allocated Reviews to conduct on behalf of the Board.

Front line staff have continued to promote Safeguarding and have attended awareness raising sessions related to Child and Adult Practise reviews during the last 12 months. In addition, Safeguarding remains a fixed agenda item on all team meeting agenda's which allows for general discussions to take place about a range of related issues, including referral mechanisms, warning signs, shared learning and things to look out for when undertaking day to day work.

Front line staff have also worked closely with partners to tackle domestic abuse. This has included a nominated representative attending the MARAC meetings and sharing

updates on behalf of colleagues in the Housing Management, Rents and Homelessness Teams and where appropriate support providers are also contacted to attend and to update about victims or perpetrators. Training has ensured staff remain able to identify concerns and work with partners to minimise risks and protect victims.

The need to identify and target support towards vulnerable people is being developed further by a new Tenant Profiling project. This 'intelligence led' approach has been designed to gather detailed personal information about tenants with a view to focussing interventions towards and maintaining close contact with, those households most likely to be experiencing difficulties.

As the Resettlement Schemes have expanded, a need for training on honour based violence and forced marriage has been identified. Welsh Government have agreed to arrange the necessary training for the Resettlement Teams, but this training will also be rolled out to staff within the Housing Solutions Service to ensure a wider understanding.

Housing Services staff record all MARF and Adult Safeguarding referrals on a spreadsheet. During 2023-2024, the Housing team submitted the following number of MARF's and Adult Safeguarding referrals:

Service Area	No. of MARFs	No. of Adult Safeguarding Referrals
Housing Solutions	62	0
Supporting People	0	0
Housing Strategy	0	0
Customer Liaison Team	0	0
Accommodation Solutions Team	0	0
Resettlement	0	1
Housing Management and Rents	7	2

The majority of referrals are made by the Housing Solutions Team which is due to the team completing and submitting a MARF for all children placed in temporary accommodation including the Council's homeless hostel (Ty Iolo).

When a MARF or Adult Safeguarding referral is submitted by Housing staff a response should be received to advise what action, if any, is being taken by Children's or Adult Services. If after 48 hours this information is not received it is chased up by a phone call. If any concerns the staff member will escalate to their Manager who should contact a Senior Officer in Social Services to discuss the case and voice any concerns.

In light of sustained housing pressures, the use of temporary accommodation has remained high over the last twelve months and includes the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Whilst this is occupied predominantly by single people, there have been growing numbers of families with dependent children placed at hotels. In light of the risks identified a risk assessment has been completed and a range of mitigations are in place. The Housing Solutions & Supporting People Team introduced the following processes in respect of safeguarding:

- The Housing Solutions Team has made regular welfare calls to hotel residents by telephone and are in frequent contact with the B&B providers. Housing Solutions staff also visit the hotels.
- All individuals placed in temporary accommodation and B&B hotels during this period are referred for floating support via the telephone to Pobl's One Stop Shop Service who are specialist support providers commissioned by the Council. All received daily phone calls initially, reducing to every other day or twice weekly depending on the needs of the person. Pobl also deliver a twice weekly drop in service at the hotel in order to give service users a variety of ways to engage with support.
- A twice weekly drop in substance misuse service was provided by Taith at the hotels, but ended due to a lack of engagement from clients. However, during this time the Taith specialist substance misuse workers were able to speak to staff to give advice in regards to the disposal of sharps etc. and left appropriate equipment at the hotels to assist staff with the disposal of drug paraphernalia if required.

Safeguarding activity within Community Safety (Housing and Building Services) Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

The Vale of Glamorgan Council continue to deliver actions against the VAWDASV Regional Strategy and work has commenced with Cardiff on the development of a revised regional strategy and the Council has actively participated in responding to the consultation for a new National VAWDASV Strategy. Structures and accountability are in place to ensure that we are able to deliver positive outcomes against the overarching objectives that were agreed.

There was a total of 94 MARAC cases (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) which are cases presented to a multi-agency meeting to discuss safeguarding issues for victims of domestic abuse that have been assessed as high risk during 2023/2024. This was a decrease from the 2022/2023 figures which is thought to be as a result of the twice weekly discussions. These discussions are multi-agency discussions that aim to improve safeguarding measures by offering support at an earlier opportunity rather than waiting for a fortnightly MARAC meeting. Over the course of 2023/2024 520 cases were discussed during the twice weekly meetings, of which 132 were referred onto MARAC. This demonstrates that a number of 388 cases were diverted away from the MARAC meetings, helping these meetings to be more streamlined and effective all the while providing a more rapid and effective support package to those experiencing high risk domestic abuse.

During 2023/2024 the DAARC service received 626 Public Protection Notices (PPNs) shared from South Wales Police. A total of 192 victims agreed to receive support from the specialist commissioned provider, Vale Domestic Abuse Services to get the support they need.

The Supporting People team provide funding to Community Safety to provide Target Hardening equipment for victims of domestic abuse. This service is tailored to the needs and risk of the victim, for example CCTV, intruder alarm, door locks and lighting is offered in order to make the victim feel safer and enable them to remain living in their own home. During 2023/2024, 102 DAARC victims received target hardening which was a positive increase from the previous year.

The Local Authority are in the process of implementing the National Training Framework and in 2023/2024 942 staff members were trained to group 1 of the NTF. A total of 4639 individuals have been trained to group 1 since publication of the National Training Framework in 2016. 1786 staff members have been reached through group 2 Ask and Act awareness training

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 enacted new provisions aimed at reforming the anti-social behaviour rules and tools previously available. The changes have made it easier for the Vale of Glamorgan to respond swiftly to reports of anti-social behaviour.

The Community Safety Team within the Council co-ordinate the multi-agency Problem Solving Group (PSG) which meets monthly to discuss incidents of ASB to ensure that early identification and intervention can be offered to perpetrators and to put in place safeguarding measures for victims of ASB.

Within the Vale there is a 4-stage approach to managing ASB which provides the opportunity to identify wider needs and support requirements and aims to stop the behaviour turning into criminal activity. For young people the 4-stage approach is the same, however a restorative approach is adopted to maximize the opportunity of stopping any further incidents and to identify preventative support that can be offered via the Youth Offending Team.

During 2023/2024 there were a total of 1979 incidents reported to the Community Safety Team of which 1336 referrals were processed.

Channel Panel (Prevent)

Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The programme uses a multi-agency approach to protect vulnerable people by:

- Identifying people at risk
- Assessing the nature and extent of that risk



- Developing the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

There is a regional Cardiff and Vale multi agency Channel Panel that meet to discuss the referrals and to ensure that the appropriate action is taken. There were no referrals to Channel in 2023/2024 for the Vale. Plans are in place for the creation of a PREVENT Partnership Board to oversee the Prevent Delivery Plan for the Vale. This will include a training matrix to ensure that all professionals understand the parameters and pathways for referring into the Channel Panel.

SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES

In delivering the Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing functions, Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) contributes to the Council's wider Safeguarding responsibilities in several ways.

2023-24 saw another busy year regarding the **Safeguarding of older and vulnerable adults**.

Doorstep Crime and Scams

SRS responds to instances of doorstep crime and scams, supporting those affected and their families where possible. These crimes can have a devastating effect on the emotional as well as the financial wellbeing of residents, and the following gives an indication of the types of interventions undertaken over the course of the year.

During 2023-24, the service dealt with 151 Doorstep Crime cases, 185 Scams and 20 vulnerable civil cases. A total of 16 residents were identified through the year as having suffered a doorstep crime incident or as having been on the receiving end of a scam.

In one rogue trader case brought to the attention of SRS, an elderly Vale of Glamorgan couple needed their bathroom replaced with a washroom to allow them to continue living independently. The trader promised that he would provide them with a 'seamless service' sourcing all the component parts and materials for the new bathroom. On that basis, the work was agreed, and given the poor state of health of the couple, this appeared to be the ideal, minimal fuss solution. Despite the couple paying the trader in full, he failed to turn up to work at their property, citing any number of excuses as to why he couldn't attend, including bereavement, vehicle breakdown and needing to give priority to a vulnerable resident with boiler problems.

During the investigation, Officers established that the trader had also lied about ordering the bathroom suite and after a significant time trying to resolve, the residents were left out of pocket to the tune of £4,500. They then had to pay for another bathroom suite and a plumber to install it. The trader was prosecuted under the Fraud Act and sentenced to an 18 month Community Order to include 240 hours of unpaid work.

To coincide with National Safeguarding Week in November 2023, SRS Officers presented at the Money and Pension Services Wales Consumer Protection Forum, focussing on scams and doorstep crime. Also during the week, Officers provided training to 50+ Forum volunteers on how to spot scams and doorstep crime, and how potential cases can be reported for support and investigation. The team visited GP surgeries throughout the Vale of Glamorgan to raise awareness of these same issues and request that SRS awareness raising information is displayed for patients to see.

Call blockers

These devices can put an end to nuisance or malicious calls. They can be installed at the homes of residents being repeatedly targeted by scams and once fitted, they prevent all calls coming through other than those from recognised friends and family numbers. SRS installed a small number of call blockers during the last year in residents' homes helping to reduce nuisance and scam calls.

Since 2014, SRS has installed a total of 70 call blockers to protect older and vulnerable people and each of these is estimated to block up to 5 nuisance or scam calls a day. It is believed that some 50,765 calls have been blocked to date, and an estimated 82 scams prevented.

Feedback from residents and their families included the comments:

- *'My mother no longer gets anxious and agitated. I cannot impress on you the positive impact this has made.'*
- *'This made a huge difference, and enables my mother to live in her own home for longer', and*
- *'Thanks for making my phone my friend again'.*

During the course of the year, return visits were made to call blocker users in the Vale of Glamorgan, to check on the devices and to reiterate crucial scams advice.

Turning to the **Safeguarding of young people**, SRS contributed through its compliance and enforcement activities in 2023-24 as follows:

111 complaints / intelligence logs regarding the underage sale of alcohol, vapes, tobacco, and knives were received from across the three local authority areas. In response to these, and with the assistance of a young volunteers, 53 attempts were made to purchase a range of age restricted products during the year. 10 of these attempts to purchase resulted in a sale (19%) of either alcohol or vapes, and the circumstances of each of these sales was investigated and appropriate enforcement action taken.

Finally, Shared Regulatory Services has contributed to the wider Safeguarding of residents and visitors to the area through its **licensing of taxi drivers** in 2023-24. While the vast majority of drivers are reputable, and the journeys they provide take place without issue, there are occasions when the SRS has to act to protect the public, particularly the vulnerable.

In 2023-24 one case was referred to the Licensing Committee following an earlier conviction. Their application to be licensed as a taxi was refused by the Committee.