

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:  
20<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2023

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 7<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2023

**“C97 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2022/2023  
(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.

Councillor Williams highlighted the ‘Working Together to Safeguard People Guidance’ under Part 7 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 which provided advice on what should happen where an individual had concerns over the wellbeing or welfare of an adult or child and wanted to ensure that Members were aware of that duty and that it was not simply the responsibility of Social Services.

Society as a whole had seen a change in recognising people who needed support and there had been an improvement in support services as a result, e.g. domestic abuse victims being allowed to remain in their own homes and feel safe instead of having to leave.

Councillor Birch was pleased to see the Council taking its responsibilities seriously with regard to education and safeguarding children and vulnerable young people and adults. She was pleased to hear that people who were subject domestic violence were able to stay in their own homes, also illustrated by Councillor John earlier on a separate agenda item, and having appropriate security precautions put in place in order to protect them.

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 would 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 Corporate Performance and Resources, Environment and Regeneration, Healthy Living and Social Care, Home and Safe Communities and Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committees, as well as Governance and Audit Committee for consideration.

Reasons for decisions

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(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: 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2023

Meeting of:	<b>Cabinet</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 07 September 2023</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report: 2022/23
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 Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is corporate responsibility to ensure that there are effective arrangements in place for safeguarding children and adults who require specific Council services.</li> <li>• This Annual Report 2022/23 provides an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding activities taking place across the Local Authority.</li> </ul>	

## **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 Corporate Performance and Resources, Environment and Regeneration, Healthy Living and Social Care, Home and Safe Communities and Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committees, as well as Governance and Audit Committee 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 Social Services, Learning and Skills, Corporate Resources, and Environment & 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.

- 1.5 The Vale of Glamorgan Council adopted the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Regional Strategy on 30th July, 2018. Structures and accountability are in place to ensure that we can deliver positive outcomes against the overarching objectives that have been agreed.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 Human Resources have implemented an electronic transfer system for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. This will speed 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.
- 2.2 During 2022/23 Cabinet took the decision that all elected Members upon taking up appointment complete a basic Disclosure & 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. An audit was completed in November 2022 and all outstanding checks were subsequently followed up. All elected member checks were completed by the end of August 2023.
- 2.3 The Social Services Directorate has experienced ongoing and sustained increase within safeguarding activity such as Section 5 Allegations Against Practitioners; Child Protection Reports and Registrations; Adult Safeguarding Reports.
- 2.4 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, we are 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.
- 5.3** The Vale of Glamorgan Council contributes to the Safeguarding Board via Cardiff Council, this amounted to £32,670 in 2022/23.

### **Employment**

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

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.7** 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 & 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.

- 5.8** 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:

[9th June, 2022;](#)

[7th June, 2021;](#)

[30th November, 2020;](#)

[29th July, 2019.](#)

## Appendix One

# Corporate Safeguarding Vale of Glamorgan Council

## Annual Report

April 2022 – March 2023



Cyngor Bro Morgannwg  
Vale of Glamorgan Council

The purpose of this report is to reflect on safeguarding activity during 2022/2023 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 update brings together key safeguarding activity that has taken place across the three Divisions of the Social Services Directorate during the period **April 2022 – March 2023**.

The Covid-19 pandemic has left a lasting impact on all areas of our service delivery. Safeguarding those who required care, support and protection in our communities has remained a priority.

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

#### **Children's Safeguarding & Review : Child Protection**

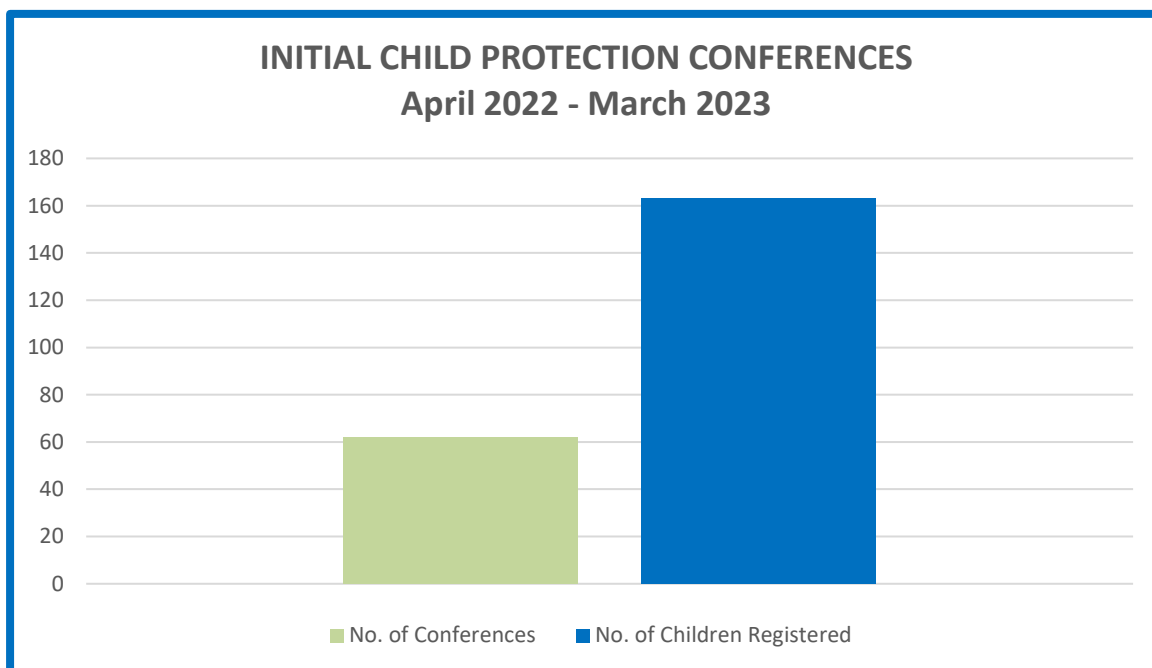
Child Protection Conferences are multi-agency meetings that include children and their parents/caregivers and take place when Child Protection (S.47 of the Children Act 1989) enquiries have identified that a child is at continued risk of harm. The S.47 enquiries will have been conducted by a social worker 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.

During the pandemic the operating model for conferences changed to taking place via virtual platform Teams. This has not impacted on our ability for appropriate discussion and decision making for children and their families. Children and their families have also continued to participate in child protection conferences, and as a consequence we have seen increased participation from parents who previously had not engaged within this forum. A decision was made that all Initial Child Protection Conferences will take place face to face from April 2023, there will still be the opportunity to join virtually for those that require this. However, at a minimum parents/carers, children, Independent Chairperson and Social Worker will be in attendance face to face.

The table below demonstrates how many initial child protection conferences were held in 2022/2023.



55 initial Child Protection Conferences were held during this period, which resulted in 151 children becoming subject to Child Protection Registration and risk planning. The difference in figures of conferences held to number of children subject to registration reflects sibling groups where there are one or more children in the family.

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 to consider, during this period only one child was considered at Initial Conference that did not result in them becoming subject to a child protection plan and registration. 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.

2022/23 has seen the number of children becoming subject to registration and child protection planning stabilising compared, to 2020/21 where significant increases were being noted. As of end March 2023 there were a total of 88 children subject to child protection registration, planning and review. 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 CP 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 Adult Safeguarding Team (Vale of Glamorgan Council) received **823** Safeguarding reports between April 2022 – March 2023. The table below details number of reports in previous years:

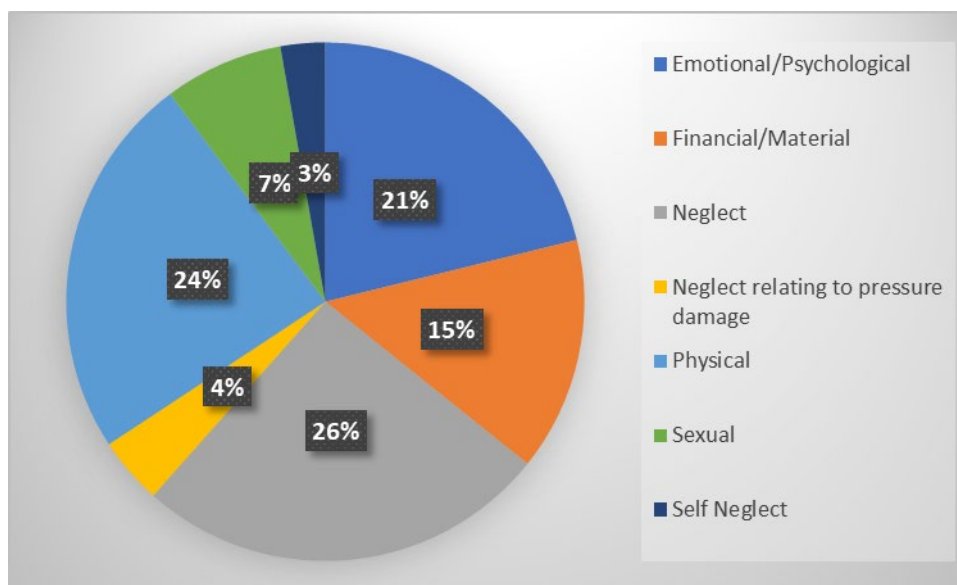
2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
318	375	445	619	602	816	823

The data above demonstrates a year-on-year increase of reporting adults at risk. 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 those **823** reports **302** proceeded to enquiry and of those **70%** were completed within the seven-working day time scale. Those out of timescale were usually only by a few days and were generally due to further information being required.

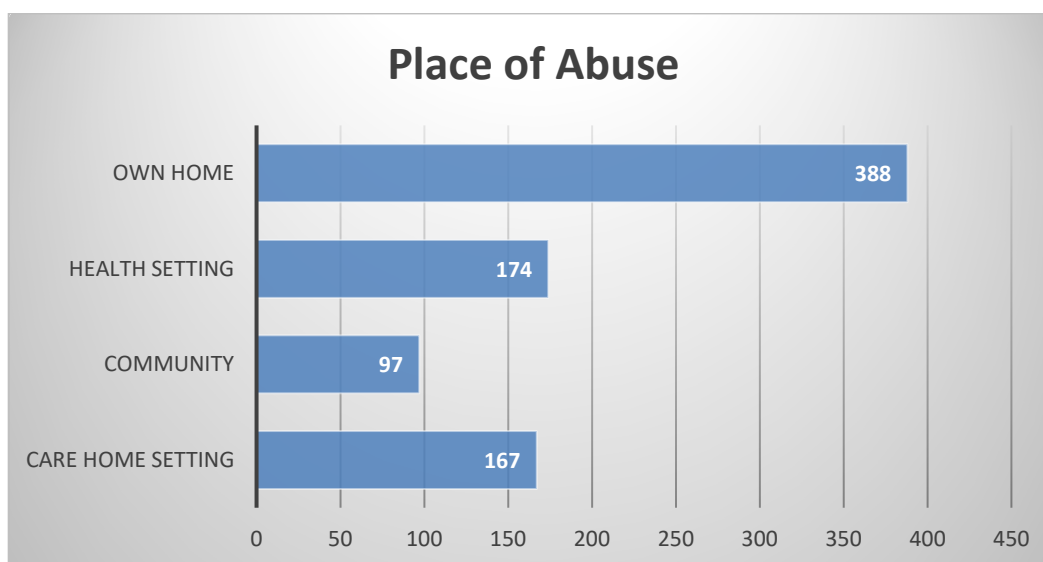
It should be noted that the number of reports that progressed to seven-day enquiries has decreased. This can be attributed to the team screening the reports and identifying other appropriate supports or responses, other than requiring a safeguarding response. This results in timely, appropriate safeguarding responses to those who require it.

Types of abuse being reported included:



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.

Location/Environment where abuse took place included:



Most of the abuse and neglect is reported as taking place in the individuals own home.

### **Safeguarding Allegations against Professionals / Positions of Trust**

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 **109** concerns in relation to practitioners working with both Children and Adults at Risk (in paid and voluntary positions) between April 2022 to March 2023. This is a **22%** increase from the concerns received between April 2021 to March 2022 and a 69% increase from April 2020 – March 2021.

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.

Of those concerns **68** were predominately working with Children and **41** were working with Adults at Risk.

Of the **68** referrals received in relation to Practitioners working with children **62** progressed to a strategy discussion with the police and other relevant agencies e.g.

Health/Education/Childrens Services. 52 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 a was a lower-level concern that could be managed via the employee's own HR procedures.

In relation to Practitioner's working with Children (that progressed past strategy discussion; 52) job roles included:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Health</i>	3	6%
<i>Guides/ Scouts</i>	2	4%
<i>Foster carer</i>	8	15%
<i>Children's accommodation (Group living)</i>	2	4%
<i>Sports</i>	3	6%
<i>Education (Teacher/ TA/ Kitchen staff)</i>	25	48%
<i>Child transport (Driver/ Escort)</i>	5	9%
<i>Social/ Youth worker</i>	4	8%

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

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Carer/ Support Worker (Domiciliary/ Residential/ Third Sector)</i>	17	77%
<i>Health (Nurse/ Doctor/ HCA/ Porter)</i>	5	23%

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'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 made.

### **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**

The domestic violence MARAC is a multi-agency forum for agencies to share information with a view to identifying those at a '**high**' level of risk of serious harm and to jointly construct a management plan to provide professional support to all those at risk. This process is managed and co-ordinated via the Safer Vale Team within the Environment and Housing Directorate.

Following the merge of police forces in South Wales, policing in the Vale of Glamorgan is provided via the Eastern Unit which covers Cardiff and the Vale.



In the Vale of Glamorgan, an effective and embedded fortnightly MARAC Meeting takes place, chaired by the South Wales Police Detective Inspector for Public Protection, with relevant staff in attendance. Representatives from both adult and children services attend these fortnightly meetings and contribute to the overall action planning.

The daily discussions model was adopted in the Vale of Glamorgan in 2021. This allows for timely multi-agency discussion and planning for identified high risk victims of domestic abuse, reducing time waiting for appropriate planning in MARAC and ensure that support and safeguards can be put in place at the earliest opportunity. These are attended by representatives of the safeguarding team.

The Operational Manager for Safeguarding sits on the MARAC Executive Group. This Group has a strategic role to monitor and review the progress effectiveness of the MARAC arrangements and process.

### **Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPPA)**

The Local Authority fulfils the duty to co-operate Section 325(3) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 ("CJA 2003") by appropriate representation in MAPPA planning and meetings from Youth Offending Teams; Education; Housing; Social Services. The Local Authority is also represented on the MAPPA Strategic Management Board which is responsible for managing MAPPA activity across our region.

### **Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board**

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



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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.



## 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 December 2022 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 2023 which was immediately recognised and support put in place for the school in question. Since September 2022, in academic year 21-22 there were 20 referrals made under Section 5 Wales Safeguarding Procedures (allegations of professional concern). During academic year 22-23 to date there has been 35 referrals. These referrals breakdown further by role, examples of this being that 10 of the allegations were made against teachers, 3 made against LSA's and a further 7 against supply Teachers / LSA's.

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 received a 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 recently revised February 2022 Keeping Learners Safe guidance and is anticipated for publication in January 2024.

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.

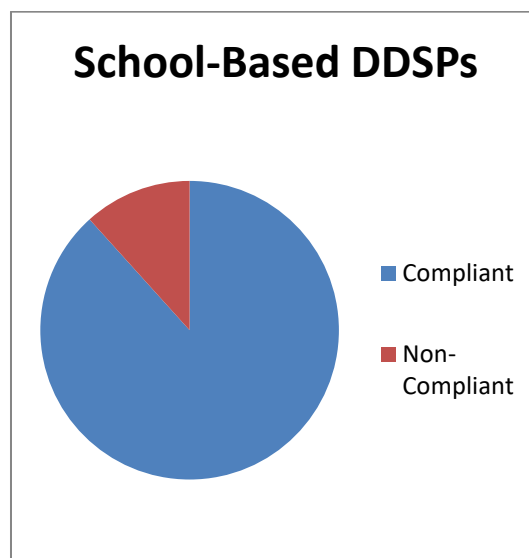
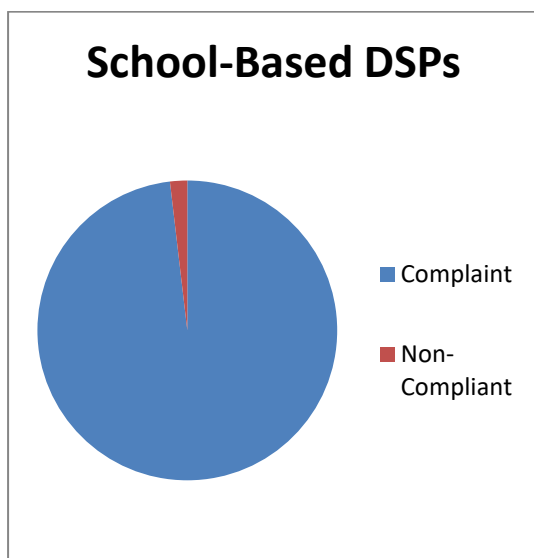
#### Compliance with annual safeguarding training:

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. At this time school-based DSPs, 53 of the 54 are in compliance, therefore compliance rate is 98%.

School based DDSPs, 68 of the 77 are in compliance, therefore compliance rate is 88%.

Directorate based DSPs, 25 out of 25 are in compliance and compliance is therefore 100%.

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 DSG's 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. As part of a planned inclusion team restructure there is now a post primarily dedicated to licensing and CIEE to further recognise the significance of this area of work. 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 Directorate continues to invest considerable effort in supporting schools to achieve 100% compliance with Safer Recruitment. Since December 2022 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 2023 which was immediately recognised and support put in place for the school in question.

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.

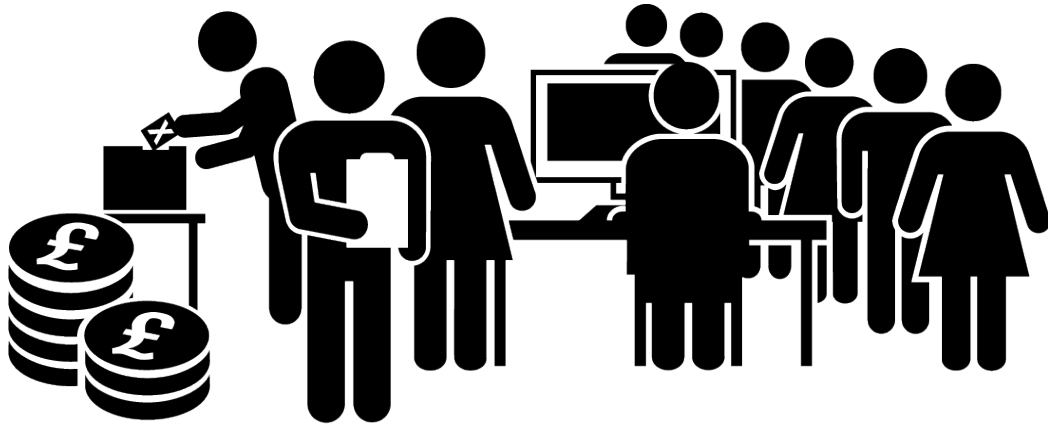
The Safeguarding Officer also contributes to the Wales Safeguarding in Education Group and to national and regional multi-agency working groups in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation, Modern Slavery / Human Trafficking, Children in Employment and Entertainment and Elective Home Education. The Safeguarding 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.

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 Directorate continues to monitor the effectiveness of the Team Teach Physical Intervention model and training remains available for all schools to improve the ability of school staff to use de-escalation techniques to manage challenging behaviour. This TT training is supported by additional LA training and focus on the potential risk to learners and professionals in the use of physical restraint and is supported by the TIS trauma informed schools' approaches. The training focuses on the need to record and reduce all forms of restrictive practice and to review all use of Physical intervention and highlights the recent report of the EHRC in this regard. Work continues to evaluate the safeguarding implications for children subject to fixed-term or permanent exclusions. 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.

With the recent publication of the ESTYN 'We don't tell our teachers' thematic review into peer-on-peer sexual harassment (Dec 21), along with the subsequent Welsh Government response, the Directorate is ensuring that the recommendations outlined at Local Authority level and school level are implemented with key workstreams including:

- improving data collection around bullying and prejudice incidents,
- awareness raising and staff confidence building around such topics as tackling school based sexually harmful behaviour,
- the formation of a Secondary schools Wellbeing panel where topics such as bullying and the use of phobic behaviour in school settings is discussed,
- provision of a 'How to' help guide to schools outlining ideas and suggestions on tackling peer on peer sexual harassment with focus on prevention, awareness raising and support victims along with correctly challenging of perpetrators.



# 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 in comparison to the same period in the previous year.

### **Overall Compliance – April 2022 to March 2023 (Schools and Corporate Services)**

Compliance with the policy for April 2021 to March 2022 for all appointments was 99% (6 breach cases), compared to 93% from the same reporting period last year (April 2021 to March 2022). 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 2022 to March 2023	April 2021 to March 2022
April	28	28	100%	92%
May	52	50	96%	86%
June	42	41	98%	89%
July	41	41	100%	87%
Aug	22	22	100%	100%
Sept	202	202	100%	90%
Oct	36	35	97%	100%
Nov	32	30	94%	100%
Dec	27	27	100%	100%
Jan	60	60	100%	94%
Feb	31	31	100%	100%
Mar	28	28	100%	97%
<b>Total</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>93%</b>

### Schools

Compliance with the policy for April 2022 to March 2023 for school appointments was 98%, which is a decrease in non-compliance from the same reporting period last year (90%).

Members will note that for the month of September 2022 (which represents the highest recruitment activity within the school academic year), compliance was 100% which is a decrease in non-compliance in comparison to September 2021 (89%). The number of new starters decreased slightly from 204 in September 2021 in comparison to 175 in 2022.

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.

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 2022 to March 2023	April 2021 to March 2022
April	17	17	100%	88%
May	35	33	94%	75%
June	32	31	97%	79%
July	10	10	100%	80%
Aug	0	0	100%	100%
Sept	175	175	100%	89%
Oct	13	12	92%	100%
Nov	18	16	89%	100%
Dec	17	17	100%	100%
Jan	36	36	100%	88%
Feb	15	15	100%	100%
Mar	7	7	100%	94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>90%</b>

### Corporate

The compliance rate for Corporate Services for April 2022 to March 2023 was 100%. This is a slight improvement on the previous year (99%).

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 2022 to March 2023	April 2021 to March 2022
April	11	11	100%	100%
May	17	17	100%	100%
June	10	10	100%	100%
July	31	31	100%	89%
Aug	22	22	100%	100%
Sept	27	27	100%	100%
Oct	23	23	100%	100%
Nov	14	14	100%	100%
Dec	10	10	100%	100%
Jan	24	24	100%	100%
Feb	16	16	100%	100%
Mar	21	21	100%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>99%</b>

**Return of Risk Assessments (Schools and Corporate Services)**

Human Resources continue to monitor the return of risk assessments for both Schools and Corporate services. Over the reporting period of April 2022 to March 2023, 6 new starters commenced employment without all the required checks in place or a signed risk assessment as allowed for by the policy.

During the year April 2022 to March 2023, 85 new starters were recruited under a Risk Assessment. This represents 14.1% of all new starters. This is a significant decrease on the previous year (24.2%).

**On-going measures**

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 (excluding Stanwell), have access to the Council’s StaffNet to enable access the Safer Recruitment and DBS policy and supporting documentation.

The Safer Recruitment escalation process requires Human Resources to identify and monitor outstanding documentation at the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> week. Human Resources continue to monitor weekly and also inform the Chair of Governors and Safeguarding Governor if the documentation remains outstanding at the 10<sup>th</sup> week and 12<sup>th</sup> week. At the time of reporting there are no schools' appointments and one corporate appointment at the 8<sup>th</sup> / 10<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> week.

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.

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.

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.

In addition, compliance of the policy is discussed at each corporate safeguarding group meeting to continually review the effectiveness of the policy.

### **Members Disclosure & Barring Service Checks**

It was agreed by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022 that all elected Members upon taking up appointment complete a basic Disclosure & 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.

An audit was undertaken in November 2022 and there were 5 out of 54 elected Members yet to complete their form for their DBS check including one Member that required an enhanced check. There were also 7 DBS checks that remained incomplete due to outstanding information being required. All elected member checks were processed by the end of August 2023.

## Conclusion

1. Compliance with the Safer Recruitment Policy remains slightly less than the expected 100% compliance, however, with only 6 breaches, this is a significant improvement on previous year's compliance.
2. The measures outlined in this report will need to continue to be applied to support this.
3. 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 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.

Housing Services staff record all MARF and Adult Safeguarding referrals on a spreadsheet. During 2022-2023, the Housing team submitted the following number of MARF's and Adult Safeguarding referrals:

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>No. of MARFs</b>	<b>No. of Adult Safeguarding Referrals</b>
Housing Solutions	48	0
Supporting People	0	0
Housing Strategy	0	0
Customer Liaison Team	0	0
Accommodation Solutions Team	0	0
UKRS	0	0
Housing Management and Rents	5	5

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 lolo).

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.

Following the COVID 19 pandemic and lockdown we have focused on the provision of critical front-line services which include homelessness. The Housing Solutions & Supporting People Team introduced the following processes in respect of safeguarding:

- Continuation of fortnightly multi-agency Centralised Co-ordination Cell following Welsh Government guidance for local authorities on supporting rough sleepers during lockdown. The Cell's meeting frequency has reduced during the last 12

months and now meets bimonthly as more of the activities that altered during the pandemic become “business as usual”. The Cell aims to manage the logistics for all accommodation, health and support facilities, as there is particular concern about the impact of these changes for vulnerable at risk of / homeless individuals and their families as services closed or reduced their visiting and intervention capacity in the community in order to protect the public and staff.

- Due to the increased demands on the homelessness service following publication of the Welsh Government guidance in respect of COVID 19, the Housing Solutions Team continue to use hotels in the Vale to provide emergency accommodation for those presenting as homeless or rough sleeping.
- 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 now provides a twice weekly drop-in service at the hotels 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 2 of 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 285 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 2022/23. This was a decrease from the 2021/2022 figures which is thought to be as a result of the twice weekly discussions that were implemented throughout the course of 2021/2022. 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 2022/23 430 cases were discussed during the twice weekly meetings, of which 147 were referred onto MARAC. This demonstrates that 283 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 2022/23 the DAARC service received 565 Public Protection Notices (PPNs) shared from South Wales Police. this is a reduction from the previous year, which reflects the impact of a change in referring protocol from South Wales Police that has resulted in PPNs without consent no longer being shared with the DAARC service. Gaining consent at the point of incident and the issues associated with this are being considered at a South Wales Police wide level. Of these cases, 811 children had an involvement with an incident. A total of 1007 referrals were made to appropriate agencies to support the victims and their families 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 2022/23, 105 properties within the Vale of Glamorgan received target hardening, this was a slight reduction than the previous year. During the course of the year target hardening was expanded to also provide for vulnerable victims of ASB. The majority of victims want to remain in their own home and therefore the service enables the appropriate safeguarding is in place, meet the needs of the victim and is a cost-effective service for the Council in terms of not requiring refuge provision.

The Local Authority are in the process of implementing Ask & Act level 2 of the National Training Framework training as directed by Welsh Government. Between March and June, 51 sessions were held in conjunction with Cardiff which was delivered to 704 attendees. Across the course of the year, 3104 staff members from the Local Authority completed level 1 training which equates to 94 % of workforce.

Agencies have continued to respond to the new ways of working imposed by Covid and the ongoing challenges created by staff absences and responding to changing guidelines. Strong messages via social media and, television campaigns to let people know that services were still operating and were available to support people were sent throughout the year. However, for some victims it proved more difficult to access help due to them not have a safe space in which to reach out. Work across the region took place to identify ways in which safe spaces could be provided for victims to seek help, for example doctors' surgeries, pharmacists and supermarkets. Ongoing work is now taking place to ensure that agencies engage with each other and with victims to plan for a future spike (as is the trend in other countries) and to also learn from the past few months.

## **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 2022/23 there were a total of 2138 incidents reported to the Community Safety Team of which 1446 referrals were processed.

Environmental anti-social behaviour saw a sharp decline from 1134 to 135 following a reduction in the number of Covid breaches of Covid-19 lockdown measures that are recorded as environmental ASB.

## **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.

Across the course of the year the Council established its Protective Security Preparedness Group which will provide the Local Authority's response to the new measures imposed by the Protect Duty, due to come out in 2022/2023. This will involve the Local Authority implementing additional measures to prepare for and mitigate against the threats of terrorism as appropriate to the local environment.

## **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.

2022-23 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 2022-23, the service dealt with 63 Doorstep Crime and 72 Scams cases. A total of 20 residents were identified through the year as having suffered a doorstep crime incident or as having been on the receiving end of a scam. A total of Some £40,300 in redress was achieved for residents.

In one case brought to the attention of SRS, family members making funeral arrangements for a relative who had passed away in his nineties were informed that that changes had been made to the deceased's Will. Unbeknown to the relatives, the changes meant that the sole beneficiary of the Will was now a tradesperson who had been doing some work at the Vale of Glamorgan home of the deceased. While it was shown that the trader had escorted the deceased to the solicitor's office where the changes to the Will had been made, it wasn't possible to demonstrate the cause of the deceased's change of mind. The fears of the relatives of course were that the changes to the Will came about as a result of duress, or through grooming behaviour being employed.

A number of prosecutions of doorstep criminals and rogue traders concluding in 2022-23 resulted in custodial sentences for the defendants and compensation for the victims. One particularly nasty case involved two brothers who travelled into the Vale of Glamorgan at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. They cold called at the home of an elderly couple and persuaded them that they needed roofing work carried out urgently. When the time came for the residents to pay the brothers, however, they were told that the agreed price for the work had been *tripled*. The work itself was of very poor quality and when the residents initially refused to pay the increased price they were met with threats and intimidation from the brothers.

At the conclusion of the investigation of this case, the men were prosecuted under the Fraud Act 2006 and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. When passing sentence, the Judge told the brothers that their offending had been planned and had had a detrimental impact not only on the finances of the elderly couple, but also on their psychological wellbeing. The Judge continued 'the victims in this case were both in their eighties who were cold called for work which was claimed by the defendants as necessary. The approach taken by you has reflected a worrying

trend during the period of lockdown in a rural area in the Vale of Glamorgan where you travelled from your home ... to dupe the victims in this case'. The men were both sentenced to 9 months in prison, however no costs or compensation could be awarded in this case.

Over the course of the year, training and awareness raising activities have taken place, including training over 50 members of the Age Cymru Hope Advocacy Service, and creating radio podcasts with BRO Radio. The SRS Safeguarding team also worked with South Wales Police on a hairdresser's project, delivering over 40 scam packs and advising salons in Cowbridge and Penarth in order for them to be aware of the warning signs and enable them, through their conversations with clients, to provide advice on potential scams.

Working with the National Trading Standards Scams Team, 32 scam victims across the region have been contacted to make arrangements for the monies they lost through scams to be returned to them.

### **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 67 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 47,580 calls have been blocked to date, and an estimated 77 scams prevented.

Recent 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 2022-23 as follows:

196 complaints / intelligence logs regarding the underage sale of alcohol, e-cigarettes, tobacco, and knives were received from across the three local authority areas. In response to these, and with the assistance of a young volunteers, 60 attempts were made to purchase a range of age restricted products during the year. 13 of these attempts to purchase resulted in a sale (22%) of either alcohol or e-cigarettes / 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 2022-23. 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 2022-23 one case was referred to the Licensing Committee following conviction or alleged inappropriate behaviour.