

Follow-up Review of Corporate Arrangements for Safeguarding – Newport City Council

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What we reviewed and why

- 1 In 2015, the Auditor General for Wales published a national report into the [Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils](#). That report made eight recommendations, of which seven related directly to councils and one related to Welsh Government.
- 2 In 2019, we assessed how the Council had addressed the recommendations in our 2015 report¹. We found that the Council had acted on all our previous recommendations, however, aspects of some remained to be fully addressed. The Council had not fully addressed three of the seven recommendations.
- 3 In this review, we have assessed the extent to which the Council has now fully addressed the three outstanding national recommendations.
- 4 Having effective arrangements for corporate safeguarding is important for the Council to ensure that its residents - both children and adults in the county - are kept safe from harm. Our review focussed on the Council-wide corporate arrangements for safeguarding. It was not a review of specific safeguarding arrangements in Education or Social Services.
- 5 We undertook the review between May 2024 and July 2024.

What we found

- 6 Overall, we found **the Council has still not fully addressed the three recommendations highlighted in our 2019 report, so there remain weaknesses in its corporate safeguarding arrangements**. We include a summary of the Council's progress against our previous recommendations in **Exhibit 1**.
- 7 We have made four new recommendations, which are set out in **Exhibit 2**. These new recommendations replace our previous recommendations from 2015.

¹ [Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children](#)

Summary of Council's progress against each of the 2015 recommendations

Exhibit 1: summary of the Council's progress against each of three recommendations issued in our 2015 national report that had not been fully addressed at the time of our 2019 report

Recommendation 3 (from our 2015 national report) – Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers by:

- ensuring that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and compliance with safe recruitment policies cover all services that come into contact with children;
- creating an integrated corporate compliance system to record and monitor compliance levels on DBS checks; and
- requiring safe recruitment practices amongst partners in the third sector and for volunteers who provide services commissioned and/or used by the council which are underpinned by a contract or service level agreement.

Implementing recommendation 3 (from our 2015 national report) is incomplete

Findings from this follow up report:

1. The Council has policies that meet the description of the first bullet point of recommendation 3 from our 2015 national report.
2. However, our 2019 report found that 'The Council does not currently provide a programme of regular training to appointing managers around safe recruitment'. As it stands, the Council still do not provide this. The Corporate Safeguarding Policy states that the Council 'Ensures that managers responsible for recruitment receive safe recruitment training which is updated on a regular basis'. This is still not currently done, so needs to be actioned to strengthen safe recruitment and to meet the requirements of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.
3. The Council has recently strengthened its Use and Management of Volunteers Policy and has policies covering the safe recruitment of staff. However, the Use and Management of Volunteers Policy, the DBS Disclosure Checks Policy, and the Safe Recruitment Policy do not cross-refer to the Corporate Safeguarding Policy to ensure consistency of policy application.
4. The Council has an integrated corporate compliance system for DBS checks that covers staff and volunteers which produces compliance reports allowing for appropriate corporate oversight.
5. The Council has provided evidence of appropriate contractual provisions conducive to safe recruitment. However, contract monitoring is done within Directorates, and there is not corporate oversight that enables the Council to assure itself that all Directorates are robustly monitoring safeguarding related provisions in contracts.

Recommendation 4 (from our 2015 national report) – Ensure all relevant staff, members and partners understand their safeguarding responsibilities by:

- ensuring safeguarding training is mandated and coverage extended to all relevant council service areas and is included as standard on induction programmes;
- creating a corporate-wide system to identify, track and monitor compliance on attending safeguarding training in all council departments, elected members, schools, governors and volunteers; and
- requiring relevant staff in partner organisations who are commissioned to work for the council in delivering services to children and young people to undertake safeguarding training.

Implementing recommendation 4 (from our 2015 national report) is incomplete

Findings from this follow up report:

1. The Council's Safeguarding policy states that safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff and members. The Council includes safeguarding training in its induction programmes for new staff. However, despite this, the Council does not have good rates of compliance with completion of mandatory training. The figures as of July 2024 show:
 - 49% of staff have not completed mandatory safeguarding training. Of those who have completed training, just over half of those completed it more than two years ago. This does not meet the Council's requirement for renewal of the training.
 - 36% of members have not completed either the e-learning or in person mandatory safeguarding training..
2. The Council has determined that Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) training is mandatory for all staff and members. However, the Council's 2023-24 annual corporate safeguarding report shows that less than 57% of staff had completed the training. 26 out of 51 members have completed this training which is a compliance rate of just under 51%.
3. Safeguarding training is mandatory for volunteers as part of the onboarding process. However, as of July 2024, only 12 out of 26 volunteers had completed the training which is a compliance rate of only just over 46%.
4. The Council provides safeguarding training for schools' staff. By April 2025, the intention is that 100% of schools will have received training. The Council told us that currently around 70% of schools have received this training. It is the responsibility of individual schools' Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSPs) to provide safeguarding training for any staff who missed the training, along with any new starters. Schools must also complete safeguarding self-evaluations and the Council checks a sample of those. Those self-evaluations give a percentage rate of compliance with safeguarding training.
5. Schools' staff compliance rate for VAWDASV training was only 16% at the time of our review.
6. The Council provides training for designated safeguarding governors. The Council also shares a safeguarding presentation with DSPs to deliver to all governors. The Council has had difficulties keeping accurate records of the completion of this training as governors can attend training at short notice. From September 2024, training for governors will be provided via a new training platform which should help the Council have better records of the training compliance rates.
7. The Council does not have a robust corporate-wide system to identify, track and monitor compliance on attending safeguarding training for all council departments, elected members, schools, governors and volunteers. We have also identified weaknesses in the Council's record keeping arrangements. Completion of training is recorded in the corporate HR system, iTrent and the information is exported to a spreadsheet. HR then manually pivot the data to work out who has completed which training. This method is not proving to be efficient or effective as the accuracy of the training completion figures has been questioned by some staff who believe that they have completed mandatory training when the records show otherwise. As part of this review, we have seen an example of records not being entirely accurate.
8. The Council has provided evidence of appropriate provisions being included in contracts conducive to ensuring that safeguarding training is undertaken. However as mentioned above, there is a lack of corporate oversight that enables the Council to assure itself that all Directorates are robustly monitoring that these provisions are being met.

Recommendation 6 (from our 2015 national report) – Improve accountability for corporate safeguarding by regularly reporting safeguarding issues and assurances to scrutiny committee(s) against a balanced and council-wide set of performance information covering:

- benchmarking and comparisons with others;
- conclusions of internal and external audit/inspection reviews;
- service-based performance data;
- key personnel data such as safeguarding training, and DBS recruitment checks; and
- the performance of contractors and commissioned services on compliance with council safeguarding responsibilities.

Implementing recommendation 6 (from our 2015 national report) is incomplete

Findings from this follow up report:

1. The Council provides an annual corporate safeguarding report to members. The report is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Cabinet and full Council. However, the report includes limited performance information, so it is difficult for members to gain assurance of the effectiveness of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements from the information presented.
2. The Council has developed some draft performance indicators for inclusion in future annual corporate safeguarding reports. These include measures on DBS checks and information on the annual service area safeguarding annual self-assessment process. Such performance indicators would improve member oversight of corporate safeguarding if they were included.
3. The Council should include trend information to facilitate oversight and accountability. In the 2022-23 annual corporate safeguarding report, schools' staff compliance with VAWDASV training was included, and the compliance rate was poor. However, this information was not included in the 2023-24 annual report, so members were unable to see the trend and current position (which, as mentioned above is also poor). Our 2019 report also stated that the Council should ensure that trend data is presented over time so readers can understand changes in safeguarding performance.
4. Internal audit carried out a Recruitment and Selection (including Safer Recruitment) review in 2022-23, but the Council has not included the outcome of that review in either the 2022-23 or 2023-24 annual corporate safeguarding reports. Not including this information also hinders members ability to fully understand and gain assurance about the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements.

Exhibit 2: new 2024 recommendations

New 2024 recommendations

Exhibit 2: Sets out new recommendations arising from this follow-up review

R1 Safer recruitment

- a) The Council should provide safer recruitment training for managers to help to ensure the Council and its residents are not exposed to risk.
 - b) The Council should ensure that its Use and Management of Volunteers Policy, its DBS Disclosure Checks Policy, and Safer Recruitment Guidance cross-refer to the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy to help to ensure consistency of policy application.
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R2 Safeguarding training

- a) The Council should improve the level of compliance with the completion of mandatory safeguarding training for staff, members and volunteers.
 - b) The Council should improve the level of compliance with the completion of mandatory Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) training for staff (including schools' staff) and members so that staff and members play their part in helping to keep people safe from harm and abuse.
 - c) The Council should ensure record keeping of compliance with safeguarding training is fit for purpose so the Council can have confidence in its safeguarding training compliance statistics.
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R3 Reporting on corporate safeguarding

To strengthen member oversight and challenge the Council should improve the quality and range of performance information presented in its annual corporate safeguarding report. This should include relevant trend information.

R4 Contract management

The Council should assure itself that there is appropriate monitoring of safeguarding contractual provisions across all Directorates. This includes ensuring contractual provisions in relation to safeguarding are adhered to and those commissioned to do work on behalf of the Council are fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities, thereby minimising the risk to the Council and its residents.



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