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Review of Corporate Arrangements for Safeguarding – **Denbighshire County Council**

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This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Gwilym Bury and Jeremy Evans under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Summary report

Summary

What we reviewed and why

- 1 We reviewed Denbighshire County Council's (the Council) corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children and adults. While certain governance arrangements for safeguarding operate regionally (in this geographical area through the North Wales Safeguarding Board), the focus of our review was on the Council's own corporate arrangements.
- 2 We undertook this review to seek assurance that the Council has effective corporate arrangements in place for safeguarding. We considered the findings of our 2014 report into the Council's arrangements to support safeguarding of children¹. We also considered the Council's progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the Auditor General's report, 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils' (July 2015)².
- 3 We undertook the review during May 2019.

What we found

- 4 Our review sought to answer the question: Do the Council's governance and management arrangements provide assurance that children and adults are safeguarded?
- 5 **The Council has effective arrangements for safeguarding, but it needs to improve monitoring and performance reporting.** We reached this conclusion because:
 - the Council has effective arrangements for discharging its corporate safeguarding responsibilities;
 - the Council has safeguarding training in place, but there are gaps in training delivery particularly amongst councillors and schools; and
 - the Council's arrangements for monitoring and reporting of safeguarding performance are not effective.

¹ Auditor General for Wales, **Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children – Denbighshire County Council, September 2014**

² A copy of the report is available on the Wales Audit Office website www.audit.wales

Proposals for Improvement

Exhibit 1: proposals for improvement

The table below sets out the proposals for improvement that we have identified following this review.

Proposals for improvement	
P1	The Council needs to assure itself that all schools complete mandatory safeguarding training.
P2	The Council should support all councillors to enable them to complete safeguarding refresher training.
P3	The Council Cabinet, Scrutiny and Service Challenge meetings should receive and evaluate the complete set of performance information on safeguarding.

Detailed report

The Council has effective arrangements for safeguarding, but it needs to improve monitoring and performance reporting

Main report

The Council has effective arrangements for discharging its corporate safeguarding responsibilities

- 6 The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for the development of effective corporate governance arrangements and satisfying all the statutory requirements. As such, the CEO has general overall responsibility for ensuring that there is an effective safeguarding policy and that procedures are in place and implemented. The Corporate Director Communities (who is also the Statutory Director of Social Services) has the final and individual responsibility for safeguarding issues. The responsibilities include making sure that the Council has appropriate safeguarding measures to protect children, young people and adults at risk. These responsibilities include monitoring the effectiveness of arrangements and reporting at a corporate level to councillors on both their effectiveness and their performance.
- 7 The Council has a Corporate Panel for Safeguarding Children and Adults (the Panel). The Panel receives information regarding the working practices and procedures of every Council service. This provides the Panel with assurance that the services are meeting their duties in accordance with the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines.
- 8 The Panel includes senior representatives from across the Council. The Leader of the Council, the lead councillor for Wellbeing and Independence, the lead councillor for Education, Children and Young People, and the lead councillor for Corporate Standards are standing members of the Panel which meets on a quarterly basis.
- 9 The membership of the Panel also includes Designated Safeguarding Managers (DSMs). These are the lead named officer in each service for implementing safeguarding procedures within their service area, although overall responsibility for safeguarding performance remains with Heads of Service. The Council's safeguarding policy states that, 'The Panel is a key method of ensuring that the DSMs collaborate and share information across the Council. They also deal with identifying any gaps in the Council's procedures in the safeguarding field along with submitting recommendations regarding updating or amending the Council's Policy in this field'.

- 10 The Chief Executive Team and Senior Leadership Team receive reports from the Panel on an 'as and when required basis'³. The Council believes this provides enough assurance to the CEO that safeguarding is receiving its due attention within the Council. However, positive assurance is also a useful message to impart and reminds those with responsibilities that safeguarding practice is working well. In the last year several reports on specific safeguarding issues of concern were sent to the CEO and subsequent briefings sent to the Council's Cabinet.
- 11 Safeguarding is included as a risk in the Corporate Risk Register and all Service Level Risk Registers. All services formally assess their safeguarding risks annually and where required should take appropriate action to mitigate future risks. The Council's Corporate Governance Committee monitor the Corporate Risk Register.
- 12 The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy is reasonably comprehensive, regularly reviewed and published on the Council's web site and intranet. The Council has a dedicated easily accessible webpage on corporate safeguarding which has a video explaining safeguarding issues to the public and links to other safeguarding related policies such as the Recruitment Policy, the Engaging Volunteers Policy and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy, and the specific policies for Adults and Children Safeguarding. The website also contains a copy of the Model Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for use within schools. The web site indicates that all schools have accepted this policy.
- 13 The Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy ensures that appointments to all appropriate posts are subject to DBS checks. Safer recruitment training is mandatory for recruiting managers. The Council states that all Denbighshire schools have a safe recruitment policy and takes assurance from the fact that recent Estyn inspections of Denbighshire schools have not raised any concerns on recruitment issues. The Council reviews the Recruitment and Selection policy regularly and encompasses the principles of safeguarding.
- 14 The Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy also includes safe recruitment provisions for contractors, where contractors are in contact with vulnerable citizens. The Council's contract monitoring team check contractor compliance with safe recruitment provisions.

The Council has safeguarding training in place, but there are gaps in training delivery particularly amongst councillors and schools

- 15 Mandatory e-learning safeguarding training for staff is in place across the Council. As of April 2019, the Council's records state that 88% of staff have completed the mandatory safeguarding training. This includes figures for face to face as well as e-learning training. The Council's performance would be higher, but only 76% of

³ Denbighshire County Council Policy and Guidelines Safeguarding Children & Adults para 7.1.6

www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/health-and-social-care/Policy-and-Guidelines-Safeguarding-Children-and-Adults.pdf

school staff have completed the training. The Council has identified several schools which are largely responsible for this unsatisfactory performance and is robustly continuing its efforts to address this poor performance.

- 16 Training in respect of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (VAWDASV) is mandatory, and completion of that training is just under 90% over a year after that training was rolled out. It is a Welsh Government requirement that VAWDASV training is mandatory and the Council needs to ensure 100% compliance is achieved. Once again, schools achieved a poorer completion rate of 84%.
- 17 Not all councillors have had safeguarding refresher training. The Council expects councillors to have safeguarding training once per administration. However, other than councillor briefing sessions, which do raise awareness, some councillors have not had safeguarding training since 2014. Current compatibility issues between councillor's iPads and the NHS's online learning platform has meant that it has not been possible to roll out the e-learning module to all councillors. However, a session on Safeguarding is planned for a Council Briefing in early June 2019 and a further refresher training session will be provided before the end of the year.
- 18 The Council, when using contractors, includes provisions within the contracts that stipulate it is the responsibility of the organisation providing the staff to ensure they receive safeguarding training. The Council's contract monitoring team check contractor compliance with delivering safeguarding training to all staff.

The Council's arrangements for monitoring and reporting of safeguarding performance are not effective

- 19 The Council has developed a series of corporate safeguarding performance measures which are reported in the Social Services Annual Director's report. The key performance measures in the 2017-18 Director's report cover safeguarding measures for both children and adults, such as the percentage of people with a care and support plan reporting that they have been given written information of their named worker in social services and the percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within seven days. For most key performance information, a comparison was provided between Denbighshire's annual performance and the all Wales average.
- 20 The Corporate Safeguarding Panel for Children and Adults receives information regarding the performance management arrangements of individual services, to provide them with assurance that services are discharging their duties and putting steps in place to safeguard children and adults. The Panel is not responsible for the monitoring of individual service safeguarding performance, this responsibility lies with the individual Head of Service and the Designated Safeguarding Manager (DSM) for each service. They deal with safeguarding children and adult issues, with the support of service management teams. Safeguarding issues are also discussed at the annual internal Council service challenges held for each of the Council's services including Adult and Children's services.

- 21 During 2018-19 the Council's performance relating to the percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within seven days declined. In 2017-18 Denbighshire's average performance was 70.2%, below the Welsh average of 80.1%. Performance continued to fall during 2018-19 when performance ranged from 56% in the first quarter of the year to 68% in the last quarter. Although the Head of Service reported the decline in performance to the Corporate Director Communities (who is also the Statutory Director of Social Services) and to the CEO it was not reported to Cabinet or other councillors. Furthermore, the information was not included in the information supplied, in January 2019, to the Council's service challenge meeting for adult services.
- 22 The Council mention safeguarding twice in the 2017-18 Denbighshire Council annual performance report, but the plan does not include safeguarding performance information. It is the intention of officers that the next annual Council performance report will now include key safeguarding performance information for 2018-19.
- 23 Members of the Council's scrutiny committees receive information regarding safeguarding annually. They receive the Director of Social Services Annual Report and the Annual safeguarding report. Whilst this provides an opportunity for councillors to scrutinise and challenge the Corporate Director on Corporate safeguarding issues, their ability to do this is limited as these reports do not contain detailed performance information, only high level 'headlines'. In the last year there have been no other performance reports on Corporate safeguarding issues to Cabinet or scrutiny committees.
- 24 At the time of our fieldwork in May 2019 Councillors we interviewed were not aware, for example, of the 2018-19 performance on adult safeguarding including the percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within seven days. The first report to Members on 2018-19 safeguarding performance was the draft 2018-19 Social Services Annual Director's report which was discussed at the June 2019 Performance Scrutiny meeting and does, for example, contain the information that only 68% of adult protection enquiries were completed within seven days.
- 25 The Council's Internal Audit undertakes regular reviews of safeguarding. Internal Audit's reports go to the members of the Corporate Governance Committee. Internal Audit's latest 2018 Corporate Safeguarding follow up report gave a medium assurance rating to the Council's arrangements.

Appendix 1

The Council's progress in addressing the recommendations made in our 2015 national report on safeguarding

Exhibit 2: Council's progress in addressing recommendations

Recommendations from the national report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Denbighshire County Council's progress against the recommendations contained in the national report
<p>R1 Improve corporate leadership and comply with Welsh Government policy on safeguarding through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the appointment of a senior lead officer who is accountable for safeguarding and protecting children and young people with corporate responsibilities for planning improvements. • the appointment of a lead member for safeguarding; and • regularly disseminating and updating information on these appointments to all staff and stakeholders. 	<p>Recommendation met. The corporate safeguarding policy is clear on this matter, - the Corporate Director Communities (who is also the Statutory Director of Social Services) has the final and individual responsibility for safeguarding issues.</p> <p>Recommendation met. The Council has a Lead Councillor for Corporate Standards who is a standing member of the Corporate Panel for Safeguarding Children and Adults</p> <p>Recommendation met. The Council's website includes the Corporate Safeguarding Policy, which is clear on respective roles and responsibilities. The Council told us such information is disseminated via emails, the intranet and the Designated Safeguarding Managers.</p>
<p>R2 Ensure there is a corporate-wide policy on safeguarding covering all council services to provide a clear strategic direction and clear lines of accountability across the council.</p>	<p>Recommendation met. There is a comprehensive corporate safeguarding policy, published on the Council's intranet and the Council's website.</p>

Recommendations from the national report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Denbighshire County Council's progress against the recommendations contained in the national report
<p>R3 Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>Recommendation met</p> <p>The Council's DBS checks policy covers all Council employees. The DBS policy also applies to agency workers, contractors, volunteers and student placements. The Council has a Recruitment and Selection Policy with a safe recruitment section.</p> <p>The Council has satisfactory ICT for recording this information.</p> <p>The DBS Checks Policy applies to contractors and volunteers and the Council have provided us with examples which stipulate the provider must ensure that recruitment of staff and volunteers is robust and safeguards children and adults at risk.</p>
<p>R4 Ensure all relevant staff, members and partners understand their safeguarding responsibilities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>Recommendation met.</p> <p>Basic safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff.</p> <p>Safeguarding training information is recorded and monitored through ICT systems and performance data is easily available to the Council on request.</p> <p>The Council has contractual provisions that stipulate that it is the responsibility of the organisation providing the staff to ensure they receive safeguarding training.</p>

Recommendations from the national report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Denbighshire County Council's progress against the recommendations contained in the national report
<p>R6⁴ 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>Recommendation partially met.</p> <p>The Council reports safeguarding performance information measures in respect of safeguarding training and DBS checks. Annual performance reports to Cabinet include safeguarding performance measures. However, the Council Cabinet should receive performance information more frequently to enable them to evaluate key performance information on safeguarding. Cabinet need the full set of performance information. In particular reference must be made to areas where safeguarding performance is below the average for Wales or where mandatory safeguarding requirements from the Welsh Government are not being met.</p> <p>Internal and all External Audit Reports go to the Corporate Governance Committee.</p> <p>We have not seen evidence that enough service-based performance data in respect of safeguarding is reported to scrutiny or that adequate benchmarking information is provided to scrutiny.</p>
<p>R7 Establish a rolling programme of internal audit reviews to undertake systems testing and compliance reviews on the council's safeguarding practices.</p>	<p>Recommendation met.</p> <p>Internal Audit have looked at corporate safeguarding during 2018.</p>
<p>R8 Ensure the risks associated with safeguarding are considered at both a corporate and service level in developing and agreeing risk management plans across the council.</p>	<p>Recommendation met.</p> <p>Safeguarding features on the Corporate Risk Register and on all Service Level Risk Registers.</p>

⁴ Recommendation 5 was directed to the Welsh Government rather than Councils so is not included in the above list.

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