

**Report to:** Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012

**Lead Member / Officer:** Lead Member for Education

**Report Author:** Education Social Work Team Leader

**Title:** Annual Audit of Safeguarding Children in Education (Quality Assurance Framework)

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**1. What is the report about?**

To update scrutiny on the last twelve months of activity of safeguarding in education and provide information on the safeguarding action plan undertaken in response to the Pembrokeshire County Council report (Sept 2011).

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide information regarding the detailed safeguarding action plan undertaken in October 2011 across education, human resources, and children services. The action plan was commissioned to ensure the current safeguarding procedures across county services would be able to stand scrutiny of inspection and were sufficiently robust and rigorous for use.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That the Committee notes the actions undertaken to date, endorses and supports the future actions to be undertaken to address the areas of weakness identified in the annual audit of schools and to address cross service safeguarding issues.

**4. Report details.**

The quality assurance framework has been implemented in schools since 2009 and will be reviewed in 2013.

The report details the activities associated within the framework covering the roles of key staff in schools and county together with the duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have arrangements in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002.

**1. Training**

All schools receive yearly whole staff training on “safeguarding” this is now embedded practice across the county’s schools. All staff are registered on a central training database with name, job title, date of training and school. Schools send a whole staff list prior to training, a register is taken on the day

of staff in attendance, staff who do not attend linked to the whole staff list is sent back to the headteacher to ensure these staff are trained in the school year.

A list of current schools trained since September 2011 is attached to the report (Appendix 1)

All services across education have now received training to all staff members. Identified staff in the services at management level are named Child Protection officers. These staff manage any concerns raised from service staff daily and ensure referrals are made on cases.

Teams trained are:

Foundation Phase  
Sensory Service  
14 -19 Team  
Complex and Medical Needs

Training has taken place with identified services who otherwise did not receive any safeguarding training. The remit was to ensure all training was relevant to the work of the services and the contact they have with children and families. The services trained are as follows:

- School Crossing Patrols (all personnel trained)
- William Mathias School Music Service Conwy/Denbighshire (all staff trained)
- Potential Projects - linked to Cymorth funding through Denbighshire County Council were also highlighted, this resulted in an audit undertaken of the agencies/service own child protection/safeguarding policies. This was to satisfy Denbighshire County Council the projects working with children had there own agency policies for safeguarding.

The audit highlighted the high level of detail in the service policies reflecting good practice and clear understanding of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. They evidenced systems relating to referral and who within the agencies dealt with this area of responsibility.

The clarity of one agency relating to referral was vague, this has been addressed, with the agency itself having now given reassurances this matter would be addressed as a matter of urgency.

## **2. Referral Activity**

### **Number of referrals made to Children Services from schools and services.**

#### **Appendix 2 - September 2011 to current**

[Appendix 2 is exempt from public disclosure by virtue of paragraph 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972]

The document identifies both schools and central services that have made referrals in the current school year. A high number of referrals in total 85 are from the north of the county defined as the Denbigh cluster of schools to the coastal area.

Only 12 referrals this school year are from schools in the south of the county. No evidence of work with the schools suggests the low referrals rates are low in the south of the county because appropriate referrals are not being made about children and families.

This has been highlighted through contact with headteachers and sessions with key staff with safeguarding responsibilities. No concerns about this issue have been raised by Children Services.

We looked at thresholds and types of cases that would merit potential referral, no theme of inactivity exists that I have detected through these sessions to merit the low referral rate in the south to date. Schools are aware they can, and do, regularly contact the safeguarding officer for advice on cases and the school effectiveness officers as well as Children Services directly for advice.

The relationship between schools and children services is positive by and large. Individual cases will at times cause professional differences of opinion, however, I have no evidence to suggest such cases have not been openly discussed and all parties understand the actions that can be taken at that time to protect and safeguard children from harm.

The schools with the highest rates of referral are similarly contacted by the safeguarding officer as part of the quality assurance framework process. Schools who submit referrals of poor quality are picked up at the time of referral and are contacted by the safeguarding officer to discuss and potentially resubmit the referral with additional information.

An example of this would ordinarily relate to the detail of facts who, what, when, where? - not being evident or provided in the referral.

A random file audit of referrals, 15 cases, was completed in December 2011 by the safeguarding officer the main findings in priority of occurrence of concern are listed below:

**All schools concerned have been contacted about the findings to date.**

1. All family details not included
2. All sections of the referral form not completed however this could well be correct as the referrer does not know the information but does not evidence this on the form - N/A unknown.
3. No focus on reason for referral or ticked multiple boxes on the form rather than main reason.
4. Insufficient information on background for referral dealt with at time of referral but still logged for audit purposes

### **3. Safeguarding Action Plan**

Please see detailed plan Appendix 3 [Appendix 3 is exempt from public disclosure by virtue of paragraph 12 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972]

The Pembrokeshire County Council Report 2011 was used as a template of areas of concern these were cross checked with Denbighshire policies procedures and systems.

The areas highlighted in the Safeguarding action plan demonstrate the rigour of approach undertaken by education, human resources and children services to establish areas of operation that required action and detailed a clear timescale to this work being carried out and completed.

I will elaborate on the action plan at the scrutiny meeting.

### **4. School Safeguarding Audit**

All schools will be required to complete and submit the annual audit to the safeguarding officer. This will form part of a report submitted to the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion outlining the key findings and themes from the audits from schools.

The findings may outline general training issues that can be addressed more efficiently by clustering schools identified offering sessions to discuss, train, update on matters highlighted in their audit reports.

These can also be discussed at the schools governing body meetings annually and form part of the evidence file for any future inspection of the school.

The audit has been highlighted as good practice by the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) and Welsh Government (WG) who have requested copies to share with other authorities across Wales.

## **5. Estyn Inspection February 2012**

The Safeguarding Officer was interviewed by Estyn inspectors as part of the recent inspection of local authority services in education. Evidence was provided, discussion on the submitted paperwork, and actions to date were reviewed. No lines of enquiry were raised from this first meeting warranting further action from the inspection team.

## **6. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

The safeguarding of children is a key priority of all the county services. The need to respond and improve services to children forms part of the joint working arrangements evident both within and outside the local authority placing safeguarding as an ongoing first priority.

## **7. Power to make the Decision**

Article 6 of the Council's Constitution

### **Contact Officer:**

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