

Report to	Partnerships Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	7th November 2024
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Elen Heaton, / Michael Reay Service Manager, Specialist Services
Head of Service	Ann Lloyd, Adult Social Care & Homelessness Service
Report author	Nerys Tompsett, Safeguarding Team Manager
Title	Safeguarding Adults in Denbighshire Annual Report 2023 - 2024

1. What is the report about?

This report summarises the annual performance report for Safeguarding Adults and provides an overview of the impact of local safeguarding arrangements and practice. To provide Scrutiny Committee oversight of the North Wales Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2023/2024 (Appendix 1).

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide Members with an overview of the impact of Local Safeguarding arrangements and practice and to review progress in this key area of work over the last twelve months. To provide Scrutiny Committee with the North Wales Safeguarding Board Annual Report which gives context to Denbighshire's performance against all other partners of the Board.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That members receive and comment on the report and acknowledge the importance of a corporate approach to the safeguarding of adults at risk and the responsibility of the Council to view this as a key priority area.

4. Report details

4.1 Over the last 12 months the Adult Safeguarding team have been focusing on the quality of safeguarding work, with particular attention on consistent performance against the Welsh Government performance indicator of enquiries completed within 7 working days. This is the only national performance indicator currently relating to Adult Safeguarding. We continue to maintain our performance, with 98.5% of enquiries completed within the 7 working day timescale for 2023/24, which has remained consistent over the last few years. However,

4.1.1 there has been an increase in the overall number of reports in this period compared to last year's data, with all 409 safeguarding enquiries being made under s126 of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014. This ensured that Denbighshire was compliant in its statutory duties, whilst also determining that any perceived risks were being reviewed, considered and acted upon where required.

4.1.2 the Safeguarding Team work closely with partner agencies to ensure that safeguarding is high on their agenda, with high volumes of enquiries from providers and professionals, who are seeking advice or guidance relating to safeguarding issues. These calls are monitored to support further analysis of any possible themes or trends that might be emerging, that may require an additional approach to support any wider safeguarding actions. (See case studies at Appendix 2.)

4.2 Section 5: Person in a Position of Trust referrals.

4.2.1 In relation to Section 5 process: *Allegations/ Concerns about Practitioners and Those in a Position of Trust*, in 2022 / 23 we saw an 84% (46) increase in section 5 referrals compared to the previous year. That trend has continued into 2023 / 24 showing a 65% (75) increase with referrals coming from Providers (43%), Health Board (33%), Local Authority (17%) and Police (9%).

4.2.2 Strategy discussions are held on all Section 5 referrals to determine the next course of action i.e. strategy discussion meeting and / or formal strategy meeting. Cases that progress to formal strategy meeting lead to outcomes based on the balance of probability as to whether the allegation was substantiated, unsubstantiated, unfounded, deliberate, invented or malicious. (See Appendix 3)

4.3 Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS).

4.3.1 There has been an increase in the number of applications received: 563 (20%) compared to 469 last year which appears to be mirroring the effects during Covid, when we saw a 26% increase. In 2022 / 23 we had an increase of 11 There could be a number of factors influencing these changes, for example a care home closed and when finding new placements for the residents new DoLS assessments had to be completed, which is standard practice, along with our most vulnerable citizens having more complex needs which then result in a DoLS.

4.3.2 260 DoLS authorisations have been granted, which is an increase of 9% (238) on last year. Assessments are either conducted in person or on Teams / Zoom. We have increased the number of managers able to undertake the DoLS signatory role which has sped up the process. Welsh Government grant funding to support DoLS work has enabled us to retain the additional Best Interests Assessor (BIA) capacity from last year with capacity to carry out assessments through the medium of Welsh.

4.3.3 With the suspension of the full implementation of Liberty of Protection Safeguards (LPS), we await to see which elements from LPS may still be applied in the next 12 months. The role of Responsible Persons Representative has been passed to BCU and discussions about the implementation of this are ongoing.

4.3.4 A further 13 applications have been submitted to Court in relation to Deprivation in Domestic Settings (DiDS). 3 of these were new applications and 10 were renewals. This represents an increase in numbers from 7 in 22 / 23 and presents a challenge due to the level of work and time required to complete court applications.

4.4 A summary of the key achievements for 2023/24.

4.4.1 There has been an increase of 17.5% (409) in the number of Adult at Risk reports received in comparison to the same period last year. Overall, reporting levels over the last 3 years have been steady, perhaps that's why the increase this year is slightly more noticeable. Whilst the number of reports has increased compared to last year, this has not translated into more reports progressing through to strategy meetings. In 2022 / 23 we saw 17% of Adult at Risk reports

going forward to a strategy meeting, compared to 15% this year. The main reason why reports don't progress to a strategy meeting is that the thresholds were not met. i.e. the citizen was not deemed to be an Adult at Risk, there was no evidence they were experiencing abuse or neglect, or any identified risk of abuse / neglect needing to be managed under safeguarding procedures.

4.4.4 Physical abuse 35% (188) and neglect 34% (183) were the most common types of abuse reported, similar to previous years and following the national trends. It is important to note, when looking at the data that more than one category of abuse can be reported within a safeguarding report. (See Appendix 3 for safeguarding data 2023/24)

4.4.5 We have continued to complete quality audits during 2023 / 24 sampling a number of safeguarding cases to review the quality and consistency of safeguarding work and the Position of Trust process (Section 5). This allows us to consider the quality of reports / referrals received, involvement of professionals, the safeguarding action taken in relation to the perceived risk and how these risks will be managed moving forward. These audits enable regular checks and review of practice, identifying good practice and learning opportunities.

4.4.6 Work continues with the Gang Masters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), in regard to the Modern Slavery referral that was submitted to the National Referral Mechanism relating to individuals who were employed within a care home in Denbighshire. The safeguarding process was implemented and those that identified themselves as victims were supported with safeguarding actions. The investigation by GLAA and police is still ongoing and when concluded we intend to hold a learning event to identify knowledge and skills that could be implemented again if required in the future.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

The Safeguarding Adults arrangements contribute directly to the corporate priorities of A healthier and happier Denbighshire, A better connected Denbighshire, and A fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

This service is already featured within existing budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well-being Impact Assessment is not required as this report makes no changes to policy.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Not applicable.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 Section 5 process still proves to be a challenge in many areas, but specifically in poor practice versus abuse/neglect etc. A draft revision of the Section 5 procedures is now out for consultation by Welsh Government, and it is hoped that the revised procedures will provide a more robust approach to dealing with those in Position of Trust.

10.2 The rollout of Liberty of Protection Safeguards (LPS) was suspended by the previous Parliament; it is still unclear what will happen going forward. In the meantime, we will continue to explore how best to respond to local pressures by developing refresher training for existing BIAs or look at investing in finding a new provider for the BIA module.

10.3 Court proceedings continue to increase, impacting on the capacity of both our operational and legal team. A DiDS referral typically takes 9 -12 months from date of application to making an Order. We often experience requests from the Court to lodge updated information as original documentation has expired whilst awaiting judicial consideration e.g. care plans which then creates additional work for both Social Services and Legal. This is not Denbighshire specific; all Local Authorities are experiencing these delays.

10.4 The Adult Safeguarding Team are losing 2 long-standing experienced staff due to retirement later in the year, and whilst we have been able to recruit a Deputy Team Manager from within the existing team. We have been able to advertise the vacancies earlier than normal, but the challenge will be attracting the right level of experience and enthusiasm to work in this highly pressurised and specialist role.

11. Power to make the decision

Scrutiny's powers with respect to this matter are set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution.