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

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This document is also available in Welsh

The team who delivered the work comprised Ian Phillips, Alison Lewis and Jeremy Evans under the direction of Huw Rees.

Contents

Summary report

Summary	4
Proposals for Improvement	5

Detailed report

The Council is implementing improved governance and management arrangements that should provide increased assurance that children and adults are safeguarded, although arrangements in some areas need further strengthening	7
--	---

The new corporate safeguarding policy helps to clarify the Council's safeguarding arrangements, but action is needed to improve governance and procedures in some key areas	7
---	---

Once implemented, the Council's new corporate safeguarding policy has the potential to strengthen its arrangements for safeguarding, but further clarity on roles and responsibilities for the operation and scrutiny of safeguarding is needed	7
---	---

Whilst the Council has safeguarding as a risk on its corporate risk register, the identification of safeguarding risks within service risk registers is weak	8
--	---

The Council's systems for the safe recruitment of staff provide some assurance but could be strengthened by formalising the risk assessment process for DBS checks and having a single central recruitment record for all staff, governors and volunteers	9
---	---

There are many strengths in the Council's arrangements for safeguarding training, but the lack of a robust recording system means it cannot be certain all staff have received relevant training	10
--	----

While safe recruitment practices are considered as part of the Council's procurement process, contract management of safeguarding arrangements could be strengthened	11
--	----

The Council regularly monitors and evaluates safeguarding information but may benefit from developing Council specific performance measures to strengthen assurance	11
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Wales Audit Office assessment of Pembrokeshire County Council's progress against the recommendations contained in the report of the Auditor General, 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils' (July 2015)	13
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Summary report

Summary

What we reviewed and why

- 1 We reviewed Pembrokeshire 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 Mid and West 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 October and November 2018.

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 Overall, we found that: The Council is implementing improved governance and management arrangements that should provide increased assurance that children and adults are safeguarded, although arrangements in some areas need further strengthening. We reached this conclusion because:
 - the new corporate safeguarding policy helps to clarify the Council's safeguarding arrangements, but action is needed to improve governance and procedures in some key areas;
 - once implemented, the Council's new corporate safeguarding policy has the potential to strengthen its arrangements for safeguarding, but further clarity on roles and responsibilities for the operation and scrutiny of safeguarding is needed;
 - whilst the Council has safeguarding as a risk on its corporate risk register, the identification of safeguarding risks within service risk registers is weak;

¹ Auditor General for Wales, **Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children - Pembrokeshire County Council**, Wales Audit Office, December 2014.

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

- the Council’s systems for the safe recruitment of staff provide some assurance but could be strengthened by formalising the risk assessment process for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and having a single central recruitment record for all staff, governors and volunteers;
- there are many strengths in the Council’s arrangements for safeguarding training, but the lack of a robust recording system means it cannot be certain all staff have received relevant training;
- while safe recruitment practices are considered as part of the Council’s procurement process, contract management of safeguarding arrangements could be strengthened;
- the Council regularly monitors and evaluates safeguarding information but may benefit from developing Council specific performance measures to strengthen assurance.

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 clarify in its Safeguarding Policy the scrutiny arrangements for safeguarding.
P2	The Council should clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Member and the Member Champion for Safeguarding in the policy and communicate this.
P3	The Council needs to publicise the new corporate safeguarding policy to ensure staff, councillors and wider stakeholders are aware of it and how it should be applied.
P4	The Council should ensure that safeguarding risks are appropriately considered as part of the move to directorate-based risk registers.
P5	The Council should formally record and retain, on the corporate HR system, the risk assessment undertaken when determining whether a role requires a DBS check (and at what level).
P6	The Council should keep all volunteer records on the corporate HR system to ensure that it has a single central recruitment record.
P7	The Council should evaluate whether producing a corporate volunteering policy would strengthen its governance arrangements for safeguarding.

Proposals for improvement

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| P8 | The Council should establish a robust system so that it can be certain that everyone who should have completed safeguarding training has received it ³ . |
| P9 | The Council should review procurement practices to ensure that safeguarding matters are fully considered and managed when services are delivered on the Council's behalf by third parties. |
| P10 | The Council should determine whether Council specific performance measures would assist scrutiny in its role and provide greater assurance on the effectiveness of the Council's new safeguarding policy. |

³ A similar recommendation has been issued previously to councils in the Report of the Auditor General, **Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils** (July 2015). Included as part of Recommendation 4 was, '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'.

Detailed report

The Council is implementing improved governance and management arrangements that should provide increased assurance that children and adults are safeguarded, although arrangements in some areas need further strengthening

The new corporate safeguarding policy helps to clarify the Council's safeguarding arrangements, but action is needed to improve governance and procedures in some key areas

Once implemented, the Council's new corporate safeguarding policy has the potential to strengthen its arrangements for safeguarding, but further clarity on roles and responsibilities for the operation and scrutiny of safeguarding is needed

6 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the visibility and knowledge about the Council's previous corporate safeguarding policy were limited. Cabinet approved a new corporate safeguarding policy on 5 November 2018 and it is in the process of being implemented. The Council needs to ensure that the new policy is effectively communicated so that staff, councillors and wider stakeholders are aware of the policy and how it should be applied.
- the new policy has the potential to strengthen corporate arrangements for safeguarding. New initiatives such as the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group and the appointment of Directorate Safeguarding Leads should help deliver better corporate ownership of safeguarding matters.
- the new corporate safeguarding policy clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of officers on safeguarding matters. The new policy lists the Cabinet Member for Social Services as the champion for safeguarding. However, since the policy has been adopted the Council has decided to appoint the Cabinet Member for Social Services as the lead member for safeguarding and a different councillor to be a champion for safeguarding. The policy needs to be amended to reflect these changes and clarify the differences in these respective roles. More publicity around the different

roles and responsibilities for safeguarding would be beneficial, for example, including this information on the Council's website.

- the policy could be further strengthened by referencing within it other corporate policies relevant to safeguarding, such as:
 - safe recruitment – policy and practice on the use of criminal record information in employee selection;
 - vetting of volunteers;
 - procurement policy; and
 - whistleblowing policy.
- the policy could also be clearer on whether the Safeguarding Audit Framework for Evaluation (SAFE), referred to in **Appendix 5** of the policy, applies to both internal directorates and external organisations. Currently the wording is ambiguous.
- the scrutiny arrangements for safeguarding need to be clearer. The corporate safeguarding policy sets out that the Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will scrutinise an annual report on compliance with the safeguarding policy. However, in the Council's constitution, safeguarding is within the remit of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and safeguarding in education is within the remit of the Schools and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Council needs to clarify the scrutiny arrangements for safeguarding. Unclear arrangements for scrutiny could lead to safeguarding matters being overlooked by those with responsibility.

Whilst the Council has safeguarding as a risk on its corporate risk register, the identification of safeguarding risks within service risk registers is weak

7 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- safeguarding is identified as a risk in the Council's corporate risk register. However, it is not identified as a risk within the service risk registers we reviewed. Most notably, it does not feature in the Adult Services risk register and it is not explicitly mentioned in the Children's Services risk register.
- following the Audit Committee's agreement with a recommendation from the Head of Internal Audit, the Council plans to move to a system of directorate-based risk registers. This model has the potential to strengthen risk management arrangements by holding directorates more clearly to account for the management of their risks. The new directorate risk registers are due to be completed by the end of December 2018, with the first one to be reported to the Audit Committee in January 2019.

The Council's systems for the safe recruitment of staff provide some assurance but could be strengthened by formalising the risk assessment process for DBS checks and having a single central recruitment record for all staff, governors and volunteers

8 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Council has a safe recruitment policy which clearly sets out its recruitment arrangements. The policy was due to be reviewed by September 2016, but it has not yet been reviewed.
- the Council has generally sound arrangements for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. It has a corporate HR system that records staff that require DBS checks and the level of DBS check required. It records the date the DBS was received, and the renewal date. The central HR team has effective arrangements in place to ensure that renewals are requested from staff members in sufficient time. If a renewal DBS is not received in time the Council has effective arrangements to ensure compliance including, if required, suspension pending renewal being received.
- if a DBS check comes back and it is not clear, the Council has a formal risk assessment process to consider this and then take a decision as to the suitability of the applicant/employee for the job role. This process has both service manager and HR involvement as well as appropriate sign off at director level.
- the Council considers, prior to recruitment, whether a job role requires a DBS check and the level of check required. This is decided in a conversation between the relevant service manager and the HR officer. This process could be improved by:
 - officers completing a written risk assessment, recording the reasons for the decision around the level of DBS check required and keeping this information on the central HR file; and
 - recording within individual job descriptions whether DBS checks are required and at what level. The HR department has already identified this as an area for improvement, which it intends to implement in the future.
- the Council applies the same standards for safe recruitment of volunteers as it does for employees and there is a corporate policy around the vetting of volunteers. Whilst most volunteer information is held on the corporate HR system there are exceptions. Governors are currently not listed but are expected to be on the system by April 2019. Volunteers working in the Leisure, Culture and Tourism service are not recorded on the corporate HR system. These records (and relevant DBS checks) are kept locally in the service department. For consistency, completeness, and to ensure appropriate corporate oversight of safeguarding information and to reduce

risk, the Council should ensure that there is a single, centrally held, recruitment record for all those working or volunteering for the Council.

There are many strengths in the Council's arrangements for safeguarding training, but the lack of a robust recording system means it cannot be certain all staff have received relevant training

9 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff⁴ and is a requirement as part of the induction process. In our fieldwork we heard positive feedback on the tier 1 training. Tier 1 training needs to be undertaken by staff every three years. However, the Council cannot be certain that everyone who should have had the training has had it. The Council recognises that a lack of a robust corporate system to record the training staff receive is an area of weakness that needs to be addressed.
- tier 2 and tier 3 safeguarding training is mandatory for certain posts and confirmation that this training has been completed is assured through appraisals/continuous professional development. It would be useful if job descriptions included the level of safeguarding training required for each post so that a corporate record of training requirements could be maintained.
- training in respect of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 is also mandatory for all staff and take-up to date in the Council is high comparative to the position across Wales.
- councillor take-up of safeguarding training has been good, with 52 out of 60 members completing the training in 2017-18.
- the new corporate safeguarding policy places responsibility on departmental managers to ensure safeguarding is part of every volunteer's induction and ensuring that the training delivered is commensurate with the role. Tier 1 training is mandated for volunteers in the Volunteering Policy for Cultural Services where a volunteer is in sole contact with the public. The development of a volunteering policy covering the whole Council could be an opportunity to bring further clarity to whether all volunteers need to undertake safeguarding training.
- the Council has taken a proactive approach to wider voluntary safeguarding training, for example, training undertaken with taxi drivers and forthcoming sessions to be held with workers in the night-time economy.

⁴ There are three tiers (levels) of safeguarding training. The Council determines which tier is required depending on the nature of the job. Tier 1 training is mandatory for all staff.

While safe recruitment practices are considered as part of the Council's procurement process, contract management of safeguarding arrangements could be strengthened

10 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Council delivers some of its services through contracting and commissioning arrangements. The Council uses a 'tender record form' which acts as a checklist in the procurement process. While the current tender record form asks if DBS checks are required, the Council could include a wider question in relation to safeguarding considerations/implications. For example, it could cover the need for staff training or additional checks to vehicles being used to transport service users.
- where the contract/service level agreement identifies safeguarding matters, ongoing contract management should include sufficient checks. This would enable the Council to assure itself that the third parties' arrangements for safeguarding are sufficient, such as ensuring that references and DBS checks are in place. The Council has recently strengthened its arrangements for contract management by ensuring that there are defined contract managers for each contract and giving those officers contract management training. However, it is still not clear if those processes provide the Council with the assurance it needs. The Council should review its procurement practices to ensure that safeguarding matters are actively considered and managed when services are delivered on their behalf by third parties.

The Council regularly monitors and evaluates safeguarding information but may benefit from developing Council specific performance measures to strengthen assurance

11 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Council monitors and evaluates safeguarding information in the following ways:
 - Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers regional safeguarding performance information reports on a quarterly basis;
 - the Corporate Management Team receives performance reports on safeguarding twice yearly;
 - an annual report of the Director of Social Services goes to Cabinet;
 - the Director of Education reports to the Schools and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee annually on safeguarding matters; and
 - Internal Audit reports that safeguarding matters are considered in the reviews it undertakes. They also produced regular reports on specific safeguarding matters.

- the quarterly performance reports to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee contain agreed regional performance measures. The Council should consider whether other performance measures developed specifically for the Council might help strengthen scrutiny and oversight in this area. For example, the Council could use the areas identified in the Auditor General's report, **Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils**, which included:
 - 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.
- the Council may also wish to consider developing performance measures to help it assess the effectiveness and impact of its new corporate safeguarding policy.
- the Council is using learning to help improve its safeguarding arrangements including: carrying out practice reviews, running learning events and embedding its Signs of Safety approach⁵.

⁵ Signs of Safety is a strengths-based approach to child protection casework developed in Australia in the 1990s. The co-creators of the Signs of Safety model were Steve Edwards and Andrew Turnell. The emphasis of the approach is focused on working with families, helping them to make positive changes.

Appendix 1

Wales Audit Office assessment of Pembrokeshire County Council's progress against the recommendations contained in the report of the Auditor General, 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils' (July 2015)

Exhibit 2: progress against the recommendations contained in the national report

Recommendations from the national report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Pembrokeshire 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>The Council has appointed a senior lead officer and lead member for safeguarding. The Council has partially met the third bullet point, however, there is room for improvement in this area (see paragraph 7 of this report and the proposals for improvement P2 and P3).</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>This has been actioned by the Council. Corporate Policy approved by Cabinet in November 2018.</p>
<p>R3 Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that 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>The Council's systems for the safe recruitment of staff provide some assurance but could be strengthened by formalising the risk assessment process for DBS checks and having a single central recruitment record for all staff, governors and volunteers (see paragraphs 9 and 11 of this report and the proposals for improvement 5, 6, 7 and 9).</p>

Recommendations from the national report	Wales Audit Office assessment of Pembrokeshire County Council's progress against the recommendations contained in the national report
<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>There are many strengths in the Council's arrangements for safeguarding training, but the lack of a robust recording system means it cannot be certain all staff have received relevant training (see comments in paragraph 10 and 11 of this report and proposal for improvements P8 and P9).</p>
<p>R6⁶ 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>The Council regularly monitors and evaluates safeguarding information but may benefit from developing Council specific performance measures to strengthen assurance (see comments in paragraphs 7 and 12 of this report and the proposals for improvement P1 and P10).</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>Internal Audit reports that safeguarding matters are considered in the reviews it undertakes. It also produced regular reports on specific safeguarding matters.</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>Whilst the Council has safeguarding as a risk on its corporate risk register, the identification of safeguarding risks within service risk registers is weak (see comments in paragraph 8 of this report and the proposal for improvement P4).</p>

⁶ Recommendation 5 was directed to the Welsh Government rather than councils so is not included in the above list.

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