

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Date Written	9 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
Report Author	Lisa Curtis-Jones
Service Area	Social Services
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*To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

# **Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2019/20**

## **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to share with Scrutiny Committee the Annual Report for 2019/20 for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the Scrutiny Committee notes and endorses the Annual Report for 2019/20.

## **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board has a statutory responsibility to publish an Annual Report on 31<sup>st</sup> July each year, to demonstrate its effectiveness in exercising its functions in the preceding financial year.

3.2 The purpose of the Annual Report is twofold; it is a tool of accountability and a tool for evaluation. Accountability has three components:

- accountability to the public;
- accountability to the statutory partner agencies of the Board; and
- accountability to the inspectorate bodies.

- 3.3 The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board is a statutory partnership made up of the agencies that are responsible for safeguarding children and adults at risk in Cwm Taf. The aim of the Board is to ensure that people of all ages are protected from abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm. This also involves preventing abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm from happening.
- 3.4 The work of the Board is delivered via a sub-group structure, which aims to support multi-agency safeguarding in Cwm Taf. The Lead Partner (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council) employs the staff of the Board's Business Unit and holds the Board's budget, to which the statutory partner agencies contribute.
- 3.5 The two key safeguarding objectives of protection and prevention underpin the work of the Board and inform the priorities each year.
- 3.6 The Cwm Taf Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) sits within the structure of the Board to enhance safeguarding practice, with agencies working together in one place to receive all safeguarding referrals and share relevant agency information to make collaborative decisions.
- 3.7 As you are aware in June 2018, the Welsh Government announced that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, Cwm Taf University Health Board would be responsible for healthcare services in the Bridgend County Borough Council area. This meant that accompanying partnership structures in the delivery of social services across the Western Bay region joined with Cwm Taf, with the creation of a new Regional Safeguarding Board for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area.
- 3.8 The first Annual Plan for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board was published on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and the progress and outcomes of this were to be published in July 2020. Due to COVID some of these deadlines moved to later in the year.

#### **4.0 KEY PRIORITIES 2019/20**

- 4.1 In addition to carrying out the core statutory functions the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board also agreed a range of priorities for the following year. These were specific areas that would enhance and support the Board to achieve its objectives and were as follows:
  - Safeguard children, young people and adults at risk from the impact of Domestic Abuse.
  - Improve the way in which we communicate, engage and promote participation with our communities and partner agencies.
  - Ensure that the transition to the new regional footprint for safeguarding is managed effectively.

## **5.0 SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2019/20**

- 5.1 The Board published an Annual Plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, setting out the priorities for safeguarding children, young people and adults in 2019/20. A summary of some of the key achievements included in the report is provided below (a full copy is available via the background papers link).

### **Strategic Priority 1: Safeguard children, young people and adults at risk from the impact of domestic abuse**

- 5.2 In our Annual Plan for 2019/20, we explained that all forms of domestic abuse have a profound effect on those who experience it. The impact that domestic abuse can have on children and young people is devastating and can lead to problems in adulthood and have a detrimental impact on their mental health and wellbeing. This is a similar case for older people, but often the domestic abuse may not be as visible or they may not be aware of the support that is available to them. Some people will be more vulnerable to domestic abuse, such as disabled people who may not have the ability to defend themselves and/or be less able to access support.
- 5.3 Close collaboration between the VAWDASV Steering Group and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board has meant a wider reach for raising awareness activities in the region. Awareness raising and training amongst the public, staff, care providers and the third sector was undertaken to increase the understanding of the early indicators of domestic abuse and how to respond to prevent the escalation of risk and incidents. In November and December 2019, four workshops in relation to Coercive Controlling Behaviour were provided to non-specialist partner agencies. 164 professionals attended the workshops which were held in order to raise awareness of coercive controlling behaviour and contribute to an improved response to victims across a range of non-specialist agencies. The workshops were led by the RCTCBC Oasis Centre in partnership with Safer Merthyr Tydfil, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Business Unit and the RCT social housing partner, Trivallis. Attendees felt that following the sessions they were more aware of Coercive Control and knew which signs to look out for and could therefore advise their teams of the same to make them more confident in this area when working on the front line and to be able to refer appropriately.
- 5.4 Funding from the Welsh Government Training Grant for Safeguarding Board was used to deliver face-to-face training with school staff on VAWDASV Level 1 to ensure compliance with WG legislation. These courses acted as a catalyst for schools to send a representative who has in turn encouraged completion amongst their staff of the e-learning module or physical paper module. This work has carried on into 2020-21 via virtual means. During Safeguarding Week, VAWDASV Group 1 training was also delivered to schools, which was promoted as part of the wider Safeguarding week publicity with positive feedback received from all schools spoken to.
- 5.5 Digital platforms have been utilised to raise awareness amongst professionals and the public on how to recognise and respond to domestic abuse involving children and adults.

- 5.6 The University and Further Education Colleges were invited to participate in the Board's Training and Communications sub-groups to support the work of the Board in raising awareness of the need to safeguard people from domestic abuse.
- 5.7 A 'Tackling Domestic Abuse' event was held during Safeguarding Week 2019. 103 professionals from a wide range of agencies throughout Cwm Taf Morgannwg attended this event in Merthyr Tydfil. The line-up included a series of presentations from various agencies, a performance from 'Spectacle Theatre Company' and a number of information stands. This was a successful event, with feedback indicating that events such as this one, themed around specific topics, would be something which professionals would welcome on a more regular basis. The evaluation of the event showed that those who attended thought it was a well organised, informative event with a great array of services present and an excellent opportunity to network and to identify how services can work more closely with each other.
- 5.8 Whilst planning for Safeguarding Week and its activity, a theme emerged of Adolescent to Parent Violence. Whilst the planning group wanted a more generic theme for the week, it was agreed that this was a relevant issue to pursue. As a result of this discussion, Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum (MTBWYF) offered to develop a DVD around this topic, supported by the VAWDASV Steering Group and CTM Safeguarding Board.
- 5.9 Specific examples of work carried out to protect and support children and adults who have been affected by Domestic Abuse are outlined on pages 14 and 15.

**Strategic Priority 2: Improve the way in which we communicate, engage and promote participation with our communities and partner agencies.**

- 5.10 In our Annual Plan for 2019/20 we explained that we needed to raise awareness with the public and professionals of the need to protect and prevent children, young people and adults from becoming at risk of abuse, neglect and other forms of harm, and provide information about how this can be achieved. We also wanted to provide children, young people and adults with an opportunity to participate in our work, increasing the amount of engagement with the public, improving links with local forums and activity groups to ensure the voices of the people we support are thoroughly embedded into our work. We also want to ensure that all feedback provided as a result of these activities is recorded and evaluated.
- 5.11 A number of improvements were identified that needed to be done in 2019/20 to improve how we share information and raise awareness around safeguarding issues with the public:
- A new website – this was launched in November 2019.
  - New facebook account was launched August 2019.
  - Various events took place to promote awareness raising and engagement around the subject of safeguarding – details of which are on page 20.

### **Strategic Priority 3: Ensure that the transition to the new regional footprint for safeguarding is managed effectively**

5.12 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, the Board became responsible for safeguarding in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil. The process of transition required effective planning and management to ensure that the Board and its partner agencies were able to continue to carry out core safeguarding functions during the time of change.

#### **Governance**

5.13 New Terms of Reference for the Board was agreed, along with Board membership and role profiles. The Director of Social Services for Bridgend became a Co-Chair of the Board and chairing and membership arrangements for the Board sub-groups were reviewed to reflect the new regional footprint. The Board's Business Unit took on responsibility for the new regional Board within existing resources and this arrangement will continue to be reviewed.

#### **Protocols and Procedures**

5.14 The Protocols and Procedures sub-group, chaired by the local authority in Merthyr Tydfil, carried out a significant piece of work to oversee the development of policies moving from Cwm Taf to Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

#### **Training, Learning and Communications**

5.15 The Terms of Reference and membership of the Board's Training and Learning Group were reviewed to reflect the new regional footprint and the chairing arrangements became the responsibility of the local authority in Bridgend. The local authority Training Departments worked together to share good practice and identify common themes and demands.

#### **Child and Adult Practice Reviews**

5.16 The existing Child and Adult Review Groups were joined to create a new Joint Review Group, chaired by the local authority in Bridgend. A single process is now in place for referrals for Practice Reviews and the co-ordination of Panels and Reviews, supported by a central pool of independent chairs and reviewers.

#### **Quality Assurance and Performance**

5.17 The terms of reference and membership of the Quality Assurance groups for adults and children were reviewed, with chairing arrangements remaining with RCT Council. A consistent approach to data reporting and audit has been developed and will undergo further improvement in 2020/2021.

#### **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs**

5.18 Further links were established between the Cwm Taf and Bridgend MASHs and identified opportunities to share good practice, particularly in the areas of information sharing and IT safeguarding platforms, that will continue to develop in 2020/21. In

addition, the Cwm Taf and Bridgend MASH contributed to an evaluation of MASH across Wales. Multi-Agency work within Bridgend's MASH continues to be productive and the Annual MASH report is rich in performance data and quality information from partner agencies with regard to their experience of working in MASH.

## **6.0 CHALLENGES FOR 2020**

6.1 This report would usually have been presented to Scrutiny last year about September/October 2020 reviewing the work of the Board from 2019/20. However due to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic the timescales for presenting this report were delayed.

6.2 The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown had a huge impact on the work of the Board partner agencies during the last few weeks of the year. This unprecedented crisis came not long after the devastating floods of February 2020 when so many communities were affected and this put additional pressures on services. However, our partner agencies' statutory duties to safeguard children and adults at risk continued to be a priority across the region. Throughout the year, partner agencies reported to the Board on the key challenges they were faced with, including:

- The boundary change and managing the differing processes, practice and guidance in relation to safeguarding across Board partner agencies.
- Managing demand, which has been an ongoing key theme for partner agencies and capacity is often at maximum levels.
- The volume of increasingly complex cases being referred in to Children's Services. In turn, trying to identify suitable foster and residential placements for children and young people presenting with complex needs.
- Accessing Continuing Health Care packages for our most complex and vulnerable children and young people.
- The need to develop an understanding of how staff training and the production of policies/protocols change and improve practice.
- The rollout of VAWDASV training to ensure compliance with Welsh Government regulations and the need to consider alternative approaches. For example, in RCT this involved teams going out into schools to train Catering staff; face-to-face courses set up within schools; booklets shared electronically to all schools with spreadsheet returns; and a focus on setting up whole school staff teams onto RCT Source to undertake the training.
- Reviewing how missing persons are managed, particularly those who go missing from a care setting. The local policing area has a number of examples where safeguarding considerations have had to be made as a result of placement of children from other authority areas. Problems have been encountered due to a lack of information sharing between authorities which has created a risk to that individual and others in the home.

- The increase in suicide and attempted suicides within the regional area. In order to focus on prevention, colleagues in South Wales Police have needed to look at trends and patterns taking an analytical approach. A challenge has been in identifying vulnerable associates who have been adversely affected by these tragic incidents. Work is ongoing to bring partners together to agree a process and structures to facilitate this.

## 7.0 NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The Annual Report has been approved by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and shared with the Welsh Government and the National Independent Safeguarding Board.
- 7.2 A copy of the report has been published on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board website.
- 7.3 Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults remains our priority in Cwm Taf Morgannwg. We will continue to address the challenges above and will update our aims and priorities moving forward to meet these challenges.

## 8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 The contents of this report relate to the following Wellbeing Objectives:
- **Best Start to Life**  
Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.
  - **Living Well**  
People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.

**LISA CURTIS-JONES**  
**CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)**

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR**  
**SOCIAL SERVICES**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2019/20	2020	
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		No