



## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Date Written	28 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
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Service Area	Safeguarding
Committee Date	13 <sup>th</sup> July 2021

*To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

### **Safeguarding 2020/21 - Internal Audit Report**

#### **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Each year the Local Authority has a number of areas that are subject to review and scrutiny by Internal Audit. This year safeguarding was listed as one of the areas that was to be considered. There was some time delay due to COVID and work commitments, but Internal Audit commenced discussions with relevant officers and completed the Audit work in April 2021.
- 1.2 The Audit involved interviews with key officers, reviewing of policies and audit of case files.
- 1.3 Safeguarding has been an area that has been reviewed and inspected on numerous occasions. Previous reports have been presented to Scrutiny in respect of other inspections and their recommendations.

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The scrutiny committee discusses and comments on the issues set out in the report.

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The internal audit was carried out by SWAP Internal Audit Services.
- 3.2 This was undertaken as part of the agreed 2020-21 Internal Audit Plan and through discussions with senior management.

- 3.3 The objective of this audit was to assess the degree to which the Council is meeting its duties, under compliance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 to preserve the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable customers. The period covered was the calendar year 2020.
- 3.4 The Risk Based Internal Auditing process (RBIA) was used which is recognised as best practice. A preliminary assessment of the risks relevant to the activity under review was completed as part of the initial planning process and engagement objectives reflect the results of this assessment. The possibility of significant errors, fraud, non-compliance and other exposures were considered when developing the engagement objectives.
- 3.5 In order to assess the effectiveness of Merthyr Tydfil CBC's safeguarding a workplan was developed involving access to the electronic database, electronic paperwork and policies. These were scrutinised by the auditor. Discussions were also held with the Principal Manager for Safeguarding, Heads of Service for Children's and Adult Services and Human Resources representatives.

#### 4.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT

- 4.1 The internal audit report concluded that Merthyr Tydfil's safeguarding services were the third highest out of a possible four categories. The overall score ranked just below the highest category of 'substantial' with an assurance opinion towards the higher end of 'reasonable'.



- 4.2 The report detailed that:

*There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.*

- 4.3 The report highlights:

- Very positive relationship between Merthyr Tydfil's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and all levels of operational and managerial staff.
- Positive use of Disclosure and Barring Service checks by Human Resources to aid safe recruitment.
- Positive use of the Wales Community Care Information System (WCCIS) to keep a good standard of social care record keeping.

- Effective responses to the Covid-19 pandemic with Merthyr Tydfil CBC Safeguarding leading a co-ordinated multi agency response ensuring services remained safe, effective and necessary Safeguarding Board activities remained in place.

Full details of the audit report can be found at Appendix 1.

## **5.0 AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 The review was very thorough and as a result of the audit there were 3 very clear recommendations:

- Safeguarding training to be available for non-social services front-line staff without computer access.
- All Elected Members to receive safeguarding training.
- Corporate Safeguarding Policy to be updated within strict timescales.

5.2 In respect of the recommendations above then each has been addressed or there are plans in place to ensure the local authority meets these requirements. Officers have already started to pilot appropriate online safeguarding learning for staff and elected members. Discussions are taking place with the Cwm Taf training team and Human Resources around staff accessing training when they don't have access to computers. Also, the Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed and updated.

5.3 This report has been presented to the Chief Executive and to the Corporate Safeguarding Reference group. All findings and recommendations will be monitored there.

## **6.0 OTHER OBSERVATIONS**

6.1 An additional issue was picked up by the audit regarding an Adult Safeguarding case where an admin error resulted in a referral not being saved in the correct place. This has been addressed and no further action is required.

## **7.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES**

7.1 The work we are undertaking around safeguarding, links with the Best Start in Life and the Living Well wellbeing objectives.

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

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL**  
**SERVICES AND DEPUTY LEADER**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No