

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	1 st February 2022
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Service Area	Safeguarding
Committee Date	15 th February 2022

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2020/2021

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to share with Scrutiny Committee the Annual Report for 2020/2021 for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Scrutiny Committee notes the Annual Report for 2020/2021.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board has a statutory responsibility to publish an Annual Report on 31st July each year, to demonstrate its effectiveness in exercising its functions in the preceding financial year. Please see Appendix 1.

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 Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend. 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. The Lead Partner (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council) employs the staff of the Board Business Unit and holds the Board 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.

4.0 SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2020/2021

- 4.1 The Board published an Annual Plan on 31st March 2020, setting out the priorities for safeguarding children, young people and adults in 2020/2021. These were:
 - 1. Enhance and promote a learning culture where the Board can evidence the difference it is making to safeguarding practice
 - 2. To have in place a fully integrated, functioning regional Safeguarding Board
 - 3. Improve communication and strengthen structural links with other Partnerships in the region in relation to areas of common concern
 - 4. Improve the way in which we engage and promote participation with our communities.
- 4.2 In March 2020, the Board developed a strategic response to the pandemic, recognising that the impact on the wellbeing of our most vulnerable children, young people and adults may be significant. We needed to be sure that those most at risk continued to be protected from abuse, neglect and other kinds of harm and that partner agencies had effective measures in place to carry out their critical safeguarding responsibilities. Merthyr Tydfil CBC managed the transition to agile working and effective delivery of its safeguarding services with a strong emphasis on two-way communication and clarity for staff. Communication sessions and clear brief “one-minute guides” were used to ensure staff and key partners were clear. Of note is the transition to a virtual Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) managed through regular multi agency manager meetings and staff communication ensuring critical activities continued despite the continued challenges.
- 4.3 In response to this, Board activities were reprioritised and a Silver and Bronze governance structure was put in place to co-ordinate the critical safeguarding activities of partner agencies. Merthyr Tydfil CBC Safeguarding chaired the Merthyr Bronze command leading key local agencies in sharing critical data, managing complex cases and overcoming challenges faced due to the pandemic.
- 4.4 Despite reprioritising Board activities, the Board was able to progress some of its priorities and a summary of some of the key achievements of the Board is provided below:

4.4.1 In relation to strategic priority 1 (enhancing and promoting a learning culture) the Board strengthened its arrangements to implement and monitor the learning arising from reviews and audits. Training was delivered to 23 practitioners to enable them to carry out chairing and reviewing in relation to Child and Adult Practice Reviews, as referrals began to rise. Virtual means were used for training and events to share learning. Merthyr have been actively involved in both adult and child practice reviews providing support as reviewer formulating the learning and as chair overseeing the process. Merthyr Tydfil CBC social services staff were involved in multi-agency monitoring groups ensuring recommendations from child and adult practice groups are implemented and learning is achieved. In line with this Merthyr Tydfil children's and adult services have further developed internal communication pathways to evidence sharing and embedding recommendation outcomes. An example of this is the use of staff communication sessions in Children's Services to reflect, manage risk and achieve meaningful implementation. Equally, within Children's Services the Quality Assurance Framework is now within its third year of implementation and has evidenced the learning journey of the service, along with how such learning has led to service improvement.

Additionally Merthyr Tydfil CBC have directly achieved support for residents and learning for agencies through involvement in Immediate Response Groups following unexpected deaths and case audits.

4.4.2 The Board's second priority was to continue to integrate safeguarding activities across the new regional footprint. This involved adapting existing policies and procedures to make them consistent across the region and identifying further opportunities to collaborate. Merthyr Tydfil CBC staff took key roles in leading this policy transition across children's and adult services. Communication pathways for embedding new policies have also been improved. Merthyr Tydfil CBC staff have also contributed to evaluation of CTM Safeguarding Board Policies and Procedures.

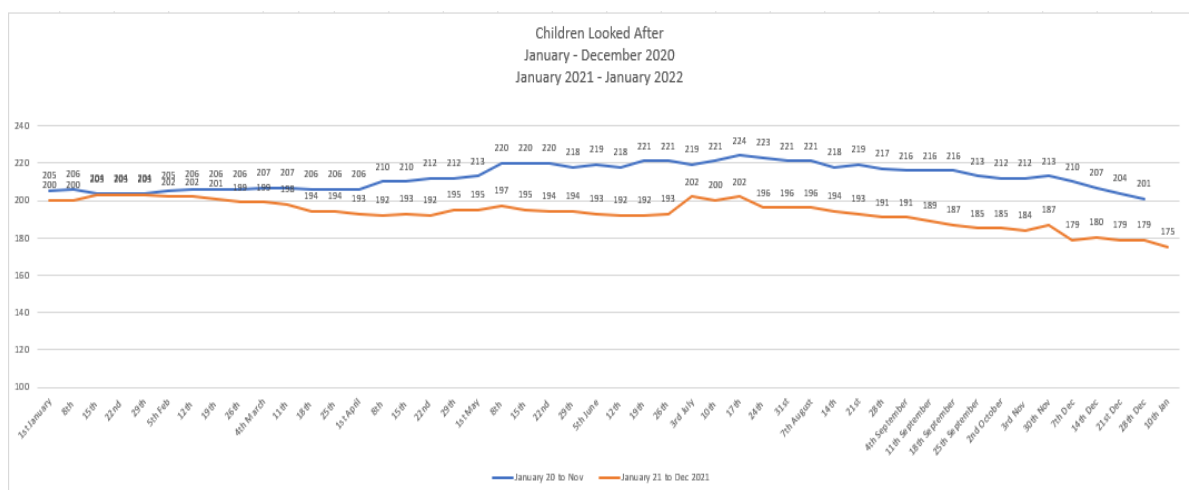
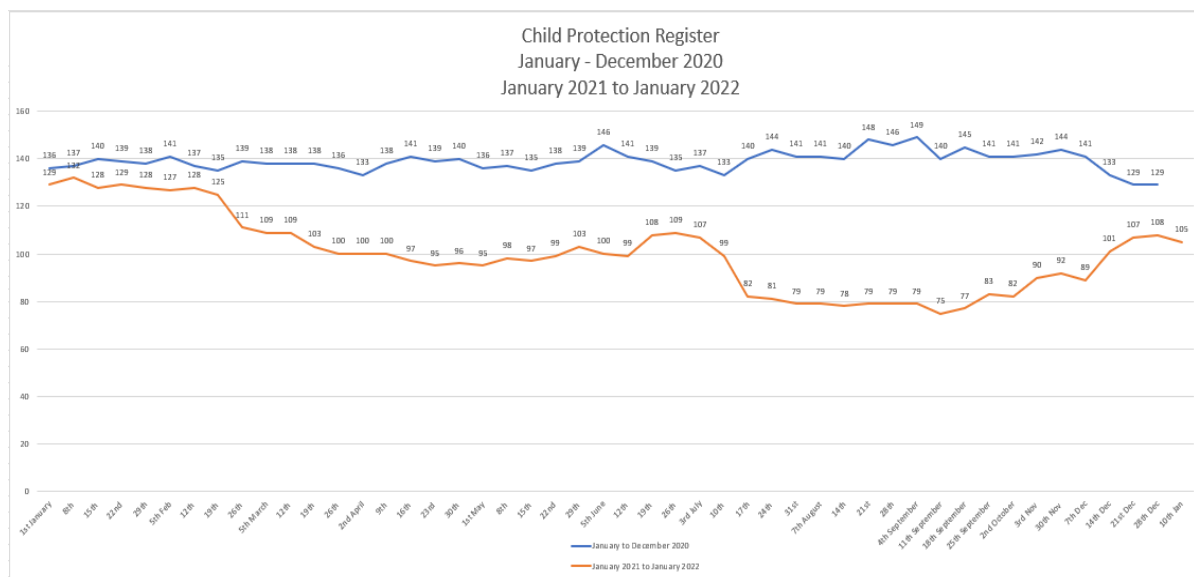
A large piece of regional adult safeguarding work began during this challenging period. The new Wales Safeguarding Procedures came into force at the very start of the initial lockdown. A transition was needed for compliance. Merthyr Adult Safeguarding was a key partner in overhauling all relevant processes and recording formats not only for our Borough but across the Safeguarding Board region achieving consistency and good compliant adult safeguarding practice across our region.

Another example was achieving a comprehensive Self Neglect Policy pulling together Merthyr Tydfil CBC and partner agencies into a collective panel to support the risk management of this challenging area of safeguarding.

4.4.3 In relation to the third priority (strengthening the links with other partnerships) a cross-partnership regional approach to suicide prevention was established and this has continued to develop over the past year.

4.4.4 Finally, in relation to opportunities to increase participation in the work of the Board, National Safeguarding Week was delivered on a virtual basis, with a focus on suicide prevention.

4.4.5 In Children’s Services Merthyr we have continued to actively support families to safely reduce number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) and who are Looked After by Merthyr Tydfil. During 2020/2021 the number of children on the CPR reduced by 25% (from 133 to 100). Subsequently children looked after numbers reduced from its peak at in July 2020 of 224 children to the current figure of 171 (reduction of 24%). This is a combination of changes in ways of working such as the development of the Supporting Change Team, Family Group Conference and the work undertaken by the Service on addressing the Court and intervention backlog created due to the COVID pandemic. Quality Assurance work was undertaken which evidences this reduction being due to positive changes to the ways we work with families.



4.4.6 During 2020 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out an inspection. They found Merthyr Social Services to be safe with a supportive culture and valued staff, to have positive preventative services, experienced skilled staff and supportive elected members.

During 2020/2021 an internal audit began looking at safeguarding activity during the calendar year 2020. The final report was positive about Merthyr’s safeguarding activities with an overall rating at the highest end of the “reasonable” spectrum. The audit fell narrowly shy of the highest possible “substantial” outcome. Positive

outcomes have resulted from this audit including increased safeguarding training for all public facing staff including elected members.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The Annual Report has been approved by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and shared with the Welsh Government, the National Independent Safeguarding Board and the five other Regional Safeguarding Boards.
- 5.2 A copy of the report has been published on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board website www.cwmtafsafeguarding.org
- 5.3 A priority for Merthyr Tydfil Safeguarding is continuing to be adaptable to the changing demands that we face due to the challenges of Covid 19. Effective joint working will ensure people are supported at the right time in the right way. Good communication with an adaptable workforce who are listened to will help us continue to achieve this alongside listening to the people who use our services. The wellbeing of our staff will continue to be actively promoted to gain resilience against the unpredictable nature of the pandemic.
- 5.4 Adult Safeguarding will embed the completed work resulting in the new Safeguarding Procedures including increasing the voice and control of adults at risk.
- 5.5 A review of child protection conferences is taking place which will result in giving a high priority to maximum positive engagement from parents in plans that are critical in keeping their children safe. Additionally, we will further use of parental advocacy in child protection conferences.
- 5.6 Using the children's services staff led group "Passion 4 Practice" we will ensure the safeguarding workforce is not only consulted but is party to setting the agenda for strategic development. Additionally, that communication sessions continue to promote a learning and reflective culture and contribute to the regional agenda.
- 5.7 We will ensuring a community voice is present in shaping service development.
- 5.8 We will continue to embed quality assurance as part of our work across Children's and Adult Services and start to realise the benefits for through more areas of our service.
- 5.9 We will ensure that early intervention and prevention work continues to be effective.

6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Identify the Wellbeing Objectives and respective plans and strategies to which the contents of the report relate. Explain how the issues in the report contribute to the Wellbeing Objectives.
- 6.2 **Best start to life**
Merthyr Children's Services are committed to providing the right support at the right time to those that need it and contribute to the early intervention and prevention agenda by helping to create the right environment for families to thrive and children and young people reach their potential.

6.3 Working Life

Children and adults are safe and supported to maximise their potential to contribute to their wider community through protection and through prevention of harm.

6.4 Living Well

Children and adults are supported to draw on their strengths and maintain positive health and wellbeing while being empowered to seek help and support when needed.

LISA CURTIS JONES
CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)

COUNCILLOR TONY ROGERS
CABINET MEMBER FOR
SOCIAL SERVICES

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