

Annual Report of the Children and Adults Strategic Panel

2013-14

Introduction

The work was started on developing a comprehensive corporate strategy for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in Gwynedd in the spring of 2013 and as a consequence of the inspection by Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, on the quality of the education services for the authority's children and young people. In addition, and at the same time, the Statutory Director of Social Services noted that she needed a structure which would be a means of ensuring the Council's commitment on a corporate basis to safeguarding issues as this was a statutory requirement. She was also eager to establish a high level structure that would be a means of identifying and respond to any problems that would arise in the field on a corporate level.

In the Report following Estyn's inspection, the following were noted as a recommendation:

Recommendation 1: Improve safeguarding by ensuring that the Council's procedures and policies are clearly understood by all employees of the authority and that the procedures and policies are regularly updated and disseminated.

Consequently, a Children and Adults Strategic Safeguarding Panel was established which includes relevant lead members and senior officers. The Panel is supported by the Safeguarding Children and Adults Operational Panel which includes designated managers from all departments of the Council. By means of these Panels, the Council has reviewed and substantially widened its arrangements in relation to safeguarding, including developing corporate and departmental policies, raising awareness and providing training and ensuring compliance with the requirements of employment checks.

Estyn notes in its report in the first post-inspection monitoring session dated 25 April, 2014:

Since the inspection, the authority has prioritised safeguarding appropriately in its strategic strategy. This has established appropriate foundations for the improvement process. Within a short period of the end of the inspection, the authority had adopted an appropriate corporate safeguarding policy. This has led to the development and adoption of corresponding policies for nearly every service.

The report raises a further action point in the field of monitoring implementing the corporate safeguarding policy to enable senior managers to:

... determine to what extent everyone who works for the authority clearly understands the procedures and policies and implement them appropriately and effectively.

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Estyn will return during the 2014 autumn educational term to assess general progress of the work of implementing the safeguarding policies and especially the methods of monitoring staff awareness and implementation of the corporate safeguarding policies.

What has been achieved during the year:

1. The Corporate Safeguarding Policy was adopted by the Council's Cabinet on 30/3/2013. This corporate policy and relevant departmental policies are in place and available to staff through the Council's intranet site.
2. A series of workshops for raising awareness have been provided – one for members and six for staff. As a result 25 members and 200 members of staff have attended these sessions. It is proposed to hold two additional sessions for staff. In addition, an information bulletin has been prepared for managers to disseminate information on safeguarding to staff. Electronic training packs have also been developed.
3. Methods of assessing staff awareness of safeguarding issues are being developed.
4. The process of reviewing the policies by means of the Safeguarding Operational Panel and forward to approval to the Strategic Safeguarding Panel has commenced its first review cycle.

The Strategic Safeguarding Panel has developed an Action Plan which has been shared into work fields as follows:

1. Ensure an understanding of the corporate safeguarding policies and procedures within the Council

- i. The Strategic Panel for Safeguarding Children and Adults and the Operational Safeguarding Children and Adults Panel were established in November 2012 to ensure that the policies and procedures were developed and implemented appropriately in the safeguarding field. Membership of the Strategic Panel includes Cabinet Members; Cabinet Member for Care, Cabinet Member for Education, Cabinet Member for Healthy Gwynedd and Children and Young People, who is also the Lead Member for Children and Young People; Corporate Director and Statutory Strategic Director of Social Services and Corporate Director and Children and Young People Lead Officer and Heads of Department.
- ii. The Strategic Safeguarding Panel is leading on establishing the strategic direction and deals with practical issues which need a high level input. The Operational Panel includes the designated managers from all Council departments and they develop work according to the direction established by the Strategic Panel.

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2. Ensure awareness of and compliance with the corporate 'Children and Adults Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines'

- i. The Corporate Policy was approved by Gwynedd Council's Cabinet on 30/3/13. The Policy will be reviewed regularly on an annual basis. The corporate policy was reviewed this year in May 2014.
- ii. Every department in the Council has produced and confirmed their departmental safeguarding policy. These will also be reviewed annually by the Strategic Operational Panel. Within each department, one manager has been appointed a 'designated person' and it will be this manager who will lead and will be a contact point in the field of safeguarding within that specific Department.
- iii. A draft of the information pamphlets and posters are currently being produced with the intention of publishing them by the beginning of September 2014.
- iv. The computer programme CETIS is being used to familiarise staff with the Council's policies and the safeguarding policy has been installed on it with the expectation that every member of staff will familiarise themselves with the policy in its entirety. 350 members of staff have followed the on-line training thus far.
- v. The Safe Workforce System which ensures that all staff who need an employment check has been set in place and is operational. The Safe Workforce System Protocol has been developed and approved. Training on the system includes Safe Workforce model which has been arranged for every member of staff who is a manager, including Senior and Middle Management.

3. Providing safeguarding training for members, staff and managers

- i. Level 1 children training has been provided by means of the e-learning programme since February 2014 and it is expected that all Council staff will have completed it successfully. Every member of staff will take the refresher training programme every three years.
- ii. The content of the Level 1 adults training sessions is being developed jointly between the Workforce Development Unit, Social Services Department and the Corporate Learning and Development Service.
- iii. Training sessions were held on 'Management of Allegations of Professional Abuse' in February and March 2013 and January 2014 for professional workers of partner agencies by the Anglesey and Gwynedd Local Safeguarding Board.

4. Approve, distribute and ensure awareness of the 'Education Service's Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines'.

- i. The Child Protection Policy has been amended and re-submitted to schools and distributed amongst central teams of the Local Authority. Arrangements

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for confirming the policies and the training are in place for staff and schools by means of the Head Teachers.

- ii. Every employee on the education payroll will receive Level 1 training, either directly or via Educare, a computerised on-line training programme. The new catering and cleaning workforce has been transferred under the education department from February 2013 onwards and a training programme is in place to provide training for the new workforce. The Council's Learning and Development Service is developing an on-line bilingual training resource which will be available to everyone. Once this is in place, there will be no need to use Educare.
- iii. A series of dates of full-day, in-service training for Level 2 were held during 2012-13 and the programme for 2013-14 is now operational. These were held by an external consultant and the department's Vulnerable Groups Officer in addition to the former Education Senior Manager who is responsible for Safeguarding. Every Head Teacher and Designated Child Protection Governor has been invited. Over 90% of staff in the Education Department have attended training thus far and the remainder will attend this year.
- iv. Relevant officers of the Department have attended level 3 training and this programme will now be arranged for other managers this year.

5. Ensure an independent annual audit of the quality of the Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures in schools

- i. The Carmarthenshire model of assessing the willingness to respond to safeguarding needs within the education system has been adapted for monitoring visits for a sample of 11 schools during the summer term. Schools were given a prior warning of the authority's intention to hold the audit during the autumn term of 2013 by means of the secondary and primary strategic groups.
- ii. Every school visited will receive a report and an action plan and a timetable for implementing the recommendations. A composite report will be prepared for the Education Department with recommendations to be incorporated in the departmental Safeguarding action plan. There will also be a report to the Strategic Panel and to the Operational Panel. The report is awaited by the end of June 2014.

6. Ensure an annual independent audit of the quality of Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures across departments and services, by sampling operational Safeguarding procedures

- i. An external consultant has been commissioned to undertake the audit work on the quality of the child protection and safeguarding procedures in Council departments. It is expected that the report will be available by July 2014.

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7. Ensure that the priority in the field of Safeguarding Children and Adults is reflected in the Council's Strategic Plan

- i. The strategic priority of the field of Safeguarding Children and Adults can be seen in the 2014-17 Strategic Plan as GOF 2. Safeguarding Children and adults

8. Lead Members to receive evidence of the Council's corporate / cross-departmental performance in relation to safeguarding children and adults matters

- i. Cabinet Members with responsibilities for the fields of Social Care and Children and Young People are members of the Strategic Panel for Safeguarding Children and Adults. The Chairman of the Panel is the Cabinet Member for Social Services and Health (Strategic). The Panel will receive reports on the basis of indicators which are being developed.
- ii. The Corporate Director, the Head of Education Department and the Head of Children and Families Services are members of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Safeguarding Board

9. Supporting the functions and duties of the Statutory Director (Social Services) within the Council

- i. The work of safeguarding children and adults is not only part of the statutory requirement of the Statutory Director but also the duty of the Council as a whole. The work of the Strategic Panel demonstrates the support of the departments across the Council regarding these duties.
- ii. The Report of the Statutory Director is published annually. Specific reference is made in the foreword to the safeguarding work and a more detailed reference to it is made in page 17 of the 2012-13 report.
- iii. The annual report of the Strategic Panel highlighting activity in the field will be published in July 2014.

10. Sharing information on the vision, priorities and policies of the Safeguarding Panel

- i. By means of the Strategic Safeguarding Panels and the Safeguarding Operational Panel, the vision, priorities and policies of the Safeguarding Panel have been disseminated to managers and staff of the Council by means of policy documents and training. An update of the Procurement Handbook will be published in June, providing directions to Council staff when commissioning and to the bodies providing services to the Council of the expectations upon them in the safeguarding field.

11. Strengthening the links between the Local Safeguarding Children Board and services within the Council

- i. Estyn's Post- inspection report was submitted to the Anglesey and Gwynedd Local Safeguarding Board in September 2013. The Statutory Corporate

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Director, the Head of Children Services and Family Support and Head of the Education Department are members of the Local Board.

- 12. The Council's commissioning or regulatory work arrangements with children and young people by other agencies/bodies**
 - i. A report was commissioned by Internal Audit to assess the needs for developing good practice within the field of commissioning and procurement. As a result, a Procurement and Contracts Task Group was established which has produced an update to the Procurement Handbook. This handbook will be published in June 2014 and will include:
 - constant guidance on safeguarding issues
 - a specific appendix on safeguarding (including standard clauses and considerations in the procurement process)
 - a specific appendix on monitoring the safeguarding requirements in contracts.

- 13. An integrated corporate database recording all staff employed by Gwynedd Council who work with children and young people.**
 - i. Work was commissioned by Internal Audit to assess the DBS check procedures and processes and on the basis of that work, improvements were made to the Disclosure and Barring Service checks process.
 - ii. A Safe Workforce Database was established to ensure that all staff working with children and young people and vulnerable adults have been identified as requiring a DBS check. A series of training sessions has been offered to managers to explain how the system works.

- 14. Ensure that there are arrangements and procedures for safeguarding Adults as a result of the recommendation of the Winterbourne review**
 - i. An analysis of the current situation has been presented to the Strategic Panel and further work is being implemented by the Adults Service and partner agencies to ensure that the recommendations of the Winterbourne report are realised in Gwynedd.

The effect of the strategy

- i. Although it's early days to measuring the impact of the strategy, feedback from the designated officers suggests that, for example, head teachers are much more aware of safeguarding issues as a result of the awareness raising activities as outlined in point 4. The designated officers have also noticed an increase in the understanding of safeguarding issues among senior managers and managers following the awareness raising sessions.
- ii. We will have more evidence of the impact of the strategy as a result of the annual audit of council departments and schools as mentioned in point 5, 6 and 7.

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- iii. The work on developing awareness measures noted in point 8 will assist the Panel in measuring the impact of the strategy and that staff are responding appropriately to safeguarding issues.

Recommendations

- i. That the Panel's Strategic Safeguarding Children and Adults to date is being recognized and that Estyn's comments on the achievement are noted .
- ii. The need for the Panel to consolidate the work achieved to date, ensure that work on the level of appropriate training for members and staff will be completed and that all the members and staff participate in awareness raising sessions or training appropriate to their role.
- iii. The need to ensure that local and national regulators feedback from their recent visits will be identified and incorporated where appropriate within the strategy and work program.

Conclusion

This report is presented to give a flavor of the activities that have taken place within safeguarding within the Council. The emphasis of the work is on the fact that safeguarding is a corporate responsibility and not only for the Education Department and the Social Services Department.