



**Flintshire County Council**

**Corporate Safeguarding Panel**

**Annual Report 2019/20**

# Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/20

## Foreword

We all have a role to play to keep children and adults safe; this corporate annual report and sets out the actions we have taken during the past 12 months to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

Our Corporate Safeguarding Panel includes representation from all Portfolios to ensure that all our services integrate safeguarding into their work. We are pleased to report that the role of the Panel has been recognised by Estyn during their inspection of the Local Education Authority in 2019:

The cross-service Safeguarding Group is beginning to influence positively the work of the Flintshire pioneer schools ... For example, they have provided schools with useful resources to support them in identifying radicalisation, potential child sexual exploitation and unhealthy relationships. In addition, they have provided helpful materials to support National Safeguarding Week, such as model lessons on county lines.

During the past 12 months we have offered a range of training opportunities to raise employees' awareness, supporting them to recognise and respond quickly and appropriately to safeguarding issues.

Not only have we been training our own employees, the Licensing Team have been making sure that all taxi drivers who are licensed in Flintshire complete safeguarding training. Taxi drivers come into close contact with children and vulnerable adults everyday and often see incidents that nobody else does.

Whilst recognising that we have much to do, we are confident that we are putting in place solid foundations on which to build and ensure safeguarding is embedded across the Council.



Councillor Christine Jones  
Cabinet Member for Social Services



Councillor Billy Mullin  
Cabinet Member for Corporate  
Management and Assets



Neil Ayling  
Chief Officer Social Services  
Joint Chair of Safeguarding Panel



Claire Homard  
Chief Officer Education and Youth  
Joint Chair of Safeguarding Panel

## Background

- 1.1 The Corporate Safeguarding Panel was established in response to a Wales Audit Office (WAO) report in July 2015: 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils'. The WAO reported that many of the corporate safeguarding responsibilities within local authorities across Wales were not well understood and identified that corporate safeguarding responsibilities needed to be fully integrated with the work of other services.
- 1.2 Our responsibilities for safeguarding are set out in legislation including the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. This Act was implemented in April 2016 and created a duty on all local authority employees, elected members and relevant partners to report any actual or suspected incidents of abuse or harm.
- 1.3 The Corporate Safeguarding Panel was established to ensure that there are robust arrangements for protecting children, young people and adults. It is jointly chaired by the Chief Officer, Social Services and Chief Officer, Education and Youth and comprises a designated Safeguarding Lead from every Portfolio. The Cabinet Member, Social Services and Cabinet Member, Corporate Management as the Council's safeguarding champions are also members of this Panel.
- 1.4 Flintshire County Council is also a member of the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board (NWSCB) and North Wales Safeguarding Adults' Board (NWSAB). Flintshire County Council's Chief Officer Social Services is the chair of the North Wales Safeguarding Adults' Board. The Annual Report of the North Wales Safeguarding Boards can be found [here](#).
- 1.5 In the Regional Safeguarding Annual Report, Flintshire Social Services reported on some of their achievements during 2019/20, including:

The establishment of the Early Help Hub enables appropriate information to be shared across agencies with a viewing to supporting families with greater needs. This approach is also supporting early identification of safeguarding concerns. This approach is enabling us to have a fuller picture of risk, support needs and the opportunity to work with families to prevent problems from escalating.

Since its inception there has been more collaborative working and a consistent representation of partner agencies around the table, which aids a multi-agency early intervention approach. Adult mental health have recently joined the Hub which is a key improvement in relation to enabling interventions to work holistically with families, in order to safeguard children.

## Key Achievements

- 2.1 As a Corporate Safeguarding Panel we set ourselves a work programme to provide focus for our work. We are also producing regular Safeguarding workforce newsletters as part of our communication plan, ensuring that we maintain the profile of safeguarding across our services. Safeguarding has also continued to be a sub priority in the Council Plan.
- 2.2 We have continued to meet bi-monthly ensuring that there is regular communication with Portfolio leads and compliance across the Council. Estyn praised the Corporate Safeguarding Panel in their inspection report of Flintshire Local Education Authority during 2019:

**Child protection and safeguarding are a high priority within the authority. The local authority provides relevant training and support to education providers, which helps all staff to know and understand their safeguarding responsibilities, including those for preventing radicalisation. Safe recruitment procedures are well managed by the human resources team and there are consistent and stringent procedures in place for dealing with any allegations against staff.**

**The cross-service Safeguarding Group is beginning to influence positively the work of the Flintshire pioneer schools who are developing the health and wellbeing aspect of the new curriculum. For example, they have provided schools with useful resources to support them in identifying radicalisation, potential child sexual exploitation and unhealthy relationships. In addition, they have provided helpful materials to support National Safeguarding Week, such as model lessons on county lines.**

County Lines refers to the transportation of illegal drugs from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries, usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. The 'County Line' is the mobile phone line used to take the orders of drugs.

- 2.3 The local authority and schools operate safe recruitment procedures and make sure that all appropriate checks are carried out. All schools are routinely reminded of their responsibilities under section 28 of the Children Act and as outlined in the Welsh Government Guidance *Keeping Learners Safe*. There is regular monitoring activity through audit procedures. Schools have been provided with a model annual monitoring report for school leaders to use to report to their governing bodies and the local authority on safeguarding matters. The Strategic Lead for safeguarding works in partnership with managers from Social Services and the Human Resources team effectively in the event of allegations against members of staff from schools.

Feedback from Head Teachers confirm the training and support for schools is welcomed and effective. Evaluation forms are completed at the end of each training delivery and the information is reviewed on an individual basis in addition to any immediate response that can be implemented.

## 2.4 Training

Increasing our employees' awareness and understanding of safeguarding is essential to enable individuals to recognise signs of potential abuse and know how to make a report. Safeguarding covers a wide range of issues and a variety of training is available to increase employees' awareness.

2.5 A Corporate Safeguarding e-learning module was launched in September 2019 providing employees with basic awareness of safeguarding. Further training has been provided by North Wales Police on Prevent, County Lines and Modern Slavery. In addition e-learning modules are available for Modern Slavery and Hate Crime. During Safeguarding Week 2019, basics safeguarding awareness was offered to all employees. In addition, drama based training, provided by AFTA Thought, was provided to Early Years' providers, two sessions were delivered, attended by 85 people.

2.6 Theatr Clwyd delivered **Justice in a Day** workshops. This interactive performance, aimed at young people deemed at risk of offending, involved a workshop with a team of professional actors and a participatory visit to Mold Magistrates' Court where an actual Magistrate took part. The content reflected the times and lives of young people today; tackling issues relating to County Lines and its consequences. 151 pupils from eight Flintshire Secondary schools participated. This project was funded by Scottish Power Foundation, North Wales Police and Community Trust (PACT).

2.7 The table below provides details of attendance at training:

Training	Numbers trained	
	Employees	NEWydd (Catering and Cleaning company)
Completion of Corporate Safeguarding e-learning modules	179	0
Completion of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence e-learning modules	2054	0
Basic safeguarding training (delivered during Safeguarding week 2019)	21	Ongoing on site with staff
Modern Slavery and County Lines	136	0
Prevent	81	0
Modern Slavery e-learning	73	0

- 2.8 More detailed specialist training is provided to professionals working in Education and Social Services.
- 2.9 Our contractors have a key role in keeping people safe, they can often be the eyes and ears in the community. Taxi drivers in particular will meet children and vulnerable adults in their daily work. During October 2019, 412 taxi drivers, operators and desk operators attended safeguarding training, arranged by the Licensing Team and delivered by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).
- 2.10 Initiatives to raise awareness of safeguarding**  
Across North Wales, alongside other public bodies, we tweeted messages to promote Hate Crime Awareness Week in October 2019, we also published a press release and circulated posters and leaflets throughout the community.
- 2.11 We participated in Safer Internet day in February 2019 and tweeted messages to the public about how to keep safe on line. A periodic Safeguarding workforce newsletter is published and promoted to all employees, keeping them up to date with safeguarding news and promoting the role of the Corporate Safeguarding Panel. A dedicated Safeguarding section is available on the intranet and website, for employees to access resources.
- 2.12 Operation Encompass**  
Operation Encompass is a safeguarding initiative led by the police, to support children and young people who are subject to or witness police attended domestic abuse incidents. This was launched in Flintshire in 2019, and involves the police contacting the relevant school when there has been a domestic abuse incident in a child/young person's home to ensure the school provides appropriate support and safeguards the child /young person against the impact of domestic abuse. 54 incidents have been reported to the relevant schools since the initiative was launched.
- 2.13 Elective Home Education**  
Elective Home Education (EHE) is the process of disengagement from the statutory education system. Within the county there is an increasing number of children who are being recorded as EHE. The Council's Education Welfare Service (EWS) engage positively with families that choose EHE as an alternative to mainstream school. The EWS is responsible for ensuring that the children recorded as EHE have access to an education suitable to their age aptitude and ability and are safeguarded appropriately.
- 2.14 Procurement**  
We have included a safeguarding statement within the Contract Procedure Rules. It is now a mandatory requirement for private hire and hackney carriage drivers to undertake safeguarding training. This will be provided to bus drivers and school escorts.
- 2.15 The Council also signed up to the Welsh Government's Code of practice: Ethical employment in supply chains, which commits the Council to a set of actions that tackle illegal and unfair employment practices. We have developed and

published a [Modern Slavery Statement](#), which sets out the action that we have taken, and will take, to ensure that there is no modern slavery and human trafficking in our business or supply chains. Random checks are also undertaken on payslips to ensure pay is being paid into the employee's accounts and to check if multiple salaries are being paid into one single account. Any changes or new accounts generated are also being checked to see who has created them.

## Prevent Strategy

- 3.1 Prevent is one of four strands of the government's counter terrorism strategy and aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent works at the pre-criminal stage by using early intervention to encourage individuals and communities to challenge extremist and terrorist ideology and behaviour. The other strands of the counter terrorism strategy are:
- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks
  - Protect: to strengthen our protection against terrorist attack
  - Prepare: where an attack cannot be stopped to mitigate its impact.
- 3.2 The Council, as a specified authority under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 has a general duty, "when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". The Prevent duty guidance sets out an expectation that local authorities will:
- establish or make use of an existing multi agency group to agree risk, co-ordinate Prevent activities and monitor the impact of Prevent work;
  - use existing counter terrorism profiles to begin to assess the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism;
  - engage with Prevent Coordinators, schools, universities, colleges, local prisons, probation services, health, immigration enforcement and others as part of the risk assessment process;
  - mainstream the Prevent duty so it becomes part of day to day work of the authority, in particular children's safeguarding;
  - any local authority that assesses, through the multi –agency group that there is a risk will be expected to develop a Prevent Action plan; and
  - ensure front line staff have a good understanding of Prevent, are trained to recognise vulnerability to being drawn into violent extremism or terrorism and know what to do if they have any concerns about an individual.

3.3 We have undertaken a self-assessment against the Prevent duty guidance, this has helped to identify areas where we need to make progress and areas of good practice, namely:

- The Chief Officer, Social Services, represents the Council on the Regional Contest Board.
- A Channel Panel is in place, and there is an agreed process for the referral of those identified as being at risk of radicalisation.
- Extensive training is on-going within the Education Service and schools, ensuring employees know what to do if they have concerns about an individual being drawn into extremism. To date all schools have received training.
- The Council's ICT policy ensures that users cannot access extremist materials.
- Policies are in place to monitor IT usage in school.
- North Wales Prevent Toolkit has been shared with all schools. The 'Toolkit' gives clear guidance on how to complete risk assessments and highlights the importance in doing so.
- Co-ordinated information is provided to schools for their adoption and implementation.
- North Wales Police provided training for our employees which was attended by some schools and elected members.
- The Prevent policies and guidance for both primary and secondary schools has been updated
- 'Me and You' training was made available to school employees, this training raises awareness of Far Right extremists and Islamists designed and build up a sense of resilience amongst the young and vulnerable who may be exposed to incorrect schools of thought/world views.
- Getting on Together (GoT) training was held on 4<sup>th</sup> October with representatives from 31 primary schools across Flintshire and Wrexham, coordinated by the Flintshire Healthy Schools Scheme The aim of the training event was to provide teachers with the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to deliver the Getting on Together 'Challenging Extremism' key Stage 2 programme during the academic year 2019/2020 to year 6 pupils.
- A clause for contracts for venue room hire has been developed and guidance for employees to ensure that our venues are not used to promote or support terrorism or may cause racial tension or lead to, or result in, public disturbance or disorder.

## How we have performed

4.1 Our performance indicators, set out in our Corporate Safeguarding policy are set out below:

Performance Indicator	
Number and percentage of employees who complete the Corporate safeguarding e-learning module	179
% of reviews of children on the Child Protection register due in the year that were carried out within the statutory timescales	100%
% of initial child protection conferences that were due in the year and were held within 15 working days of the strategy discussion	86.3%

## Good news stories

**5.1** Some examples of how we have safeguarded adults and young people during the year are shown below.

### **Safeguarding a victim of modern slavery**

An older female, whom had previously worked as a nurse had been left in the Flintshire Connects office by Police after the landlord had rang them to remove her from the property she rented. Following support from the Adult Safeguarding Team, it transpired that the woman had been trafficked into this country in the 1950's/60's from Kenya and had been exploited financially and sexually. Through joint working with our Housing service, the Adult Safeguarding Team and BAWSO<sup>1</sup>, the woman was provided with support and moved into a refuge.

### **Recognition by the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner for safeguarding young people**

Partnership working between Social Services and North Wales Police led to the successful prosecution of County Lines' perpetrators involved with exploiting young people in the county. The Team won the Police and Crime Commissioner's Award for their diligence in ensuring the victims were safeguarded and the perpetrators were brought to justice.

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<sup>1</sup> BAWSO deliver specialist services for people from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background.

## Keeping people safe during COVID-19

6.1 The Single Point of Access (SPoA) was the main contact for Flintshire residents who felt vulnerable and were in need of support, during COVID-19. In addition, through the Council’s Customer Contact Service, a dedicated Covid-19 – “Residents at Risk” in-box was set up to respond to any enquires from people who received a shielding letter from Welsh Government. This was managed by a Housing team who were able to triage enquiries and refer on to other agencies for support, including local voluntary groups. This team undertook regular, well-being calls to Housing tenants and those on the shielded list who were socially isolated during this period.

6.2 We also worked with the local Voluntary Council, Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC), to recruit volunteers to support Social Services. The volunteers were involved in activities such as delivering Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Care Homes and Domiciliary providers, offering one to one telephone support, one to one exercise support, shopping and medication collection.

6.3 The Well Fed Emergency food support programme delivered fresh meals to everyone who is referred as being hungry or under the threat of having no access to food and were on the shielded list. During the COVID -19 restrictions and the Welsh Government shielded period we have supported our shielded and most vulnerable residents with nutritious healthy meals. The Food parcels consisted of freshly prepared meals as well as provisions such as bread, milk, eggs and other fresh produce. Our deliveries are often the only food some residents, who are shielding receive.

### 6.4 Safeguarding Referrals

During the lockdown period there was a reduction in safeguarding referrals. The table below shows the movement on referrals over the first four weeks of restrictions in Children’s Services in total.

Period	Referrals received
March/April 2019	609
March/April 2020	417
	<b>31% decrease</b>

The table below show the reduction in adult safeguarding referrals during the first four weeks of lockdown.

Period	Referrals received
March/April 2019	67
March /April 2020	21
	<b>68% decrease</b>

6.5 It is anticipated that once all partner agencies resume 'business as usual' there will be a spike in referrals coming into social care for both adults and children's services. It would appear that the lower end of referrals, into early help hub, prevention, requests for advice, assistance and guidance or one off requests for help have substantially reduced and it is likely that these are the referrals that may potentially spike. As attendance at Accident and Emergency returns to normal, schools return to full capacity and police are called to more general incidents as lockdown restrictions are eased, we are likely to see a surge in referrals.

6.6 This potential is detailed in Social Services' risk register with appropriate controls and an Early Support Bronze group has been convened to look at some of these issues. Some new processes have already been implemented in preparation for any potential surge. To meet any potential spike in referrals and ensure vulnerable children and adult are safeguarded during COVID-19:

- A new process is in place within Education to maintain contact with vulnerable children/families they may have concerns about but do not necessarily meet thresholds for child protection. This includes escalation through Inclusion Welfare Officers and the Early Help Hub.
- Operating a virtual Early Help Hub to ensure we continue to offer information and advice to prevent problems escalating
- We have issued a corporate press release encouraging the public to be aware of, and report safeguarding concerns. This has also been done through the Regional Safeguarding Board
- We continue to visit children on the child protection register and children looked after and adults at risk, during the pandemic
- Prior to COVID-19 we asked Internal Audit to review processes in Children's Services for managing referrals and we are using this time to streamline our front door business processes in line with their findings. This includes bringing additional business support capacity to our front door to enable timely inputting of referrals and processing of decisions in PARIS. This will help in processing any surge in referrals, ensuring timely decisions and getting the referral on the most appropriate pathway.
- Adult Safeguarding are holding virtual strategy meetings which has increased attendance of partner agencies and therefore intervention planning and risk management is timely. This process is likely to continue only holding face to face meetings for more complex, organisational concerns.
- Consideration will be given to weekend working in adult safeguarding should this be needed to manage any influx in referrals as SPOA (Single Point of Access) has already commenced this process.

6.7 In the following circumstances employees are continuing with direct visits to families:

- Child Protection Section 47 investigations where the information provided/ gathered identifies a need to visit the home/ see the child.

- Child Protection statutory visits
- Viability assessments – for the purposes of conducting the health and safety checklist.
- Any other visit as directed by management team in order to manage risk / prevent placement breakdown.

6.8 Schools through consortia arrangements provided Resilience Hubs. The Resilience Hubs supported the children of key workers and vulnerable children also accessed this provision. The following criteria was developed to inform this decision making:

- Children who are at a significantly increased safeguarding risk from being at home
- Children whose family/placement would be at risk of breakdown without access to external provision

Levels of need fluctuated and after each child protection visit the situation was reassessed as to whether the child should begin attending school

6.9 Meetings have continued to be convened virtually when required, these include:

- Initial and Review child protection case conferences,
- Part 4 of the All Wales Child Protection meetings,
- meetings under Self Neglect and Hoarding Policies,
- Managing Professional Allegations meetings,
- meetings under Public Law Outline (PLO),
- internal legal advice meetings,
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), and
- Multi agency Public Protection arrangement (MAPPA) meetings

6.10 Deprivation of Liberty (DoLs) and Mental Capacity Act assessments have continued to be undertaken either virtually or with visits complying within social distancing guidelines.

6.11 The Adults at Risk team in Social Services worked closely with colleagues in other departments and agencies to identify people who might be most at risk of “falling between the cracks” – those who do not receive domiciliary support and who may be less able to adapt and adjust to new ways of living during a time of crisis. Once identified, we contacted these people and assess their care and support needs. We are working with the third sector and with colleagues to tap into food and support networks, so that we can be sure that this very vulnerable group are not missed.

**Key priorities 2020/21**

## 7.0 Our key priorities for 2020/21 are:

- Continue to participate in national Safeguarding Week 2020 to ensure that we raise awareness of safeguarding issues to our workforce and members of the public.
- Raise awareness of the new Wales Safeguarding Procedures which are now due to be launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.
- Encourage employees to complete the Welsh Government's e-learning module "Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Against Women" to achieve 100% completion rate by March 2021.
- Continue to raise awareness of Modern Slavery ensuring employees recognise the signs and know how to make a referral.
- Develop and implement and regularly review a new corporate safeguarding action plan to ensure we are meeting the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office recommendations for corporate safeguarding.
- Support the shared, high profile priorities of the Regional Safeguarding Children's Board and Regional Safeguarding Adults' Board: Exploitation and Domestic Abuse and develop actions to raise awareness of these issues.