



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING CABINET BOARD

9th December 2021

**JOINT Report of the Director of Social Services, Health and
Housing - Andrew Jarrett
and
the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning –
Andrew Thomas**

Matter for Monitoring & Information

Wards Affected All Wards

FINAL LETTER AND JOINT ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING THE JOINT INSPECTION OF CHILD PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS (JICPA) ACROSS NEATH & PORT TALBOT (NPT)

Purpose of the Report

This report serves to share the findings of the JICPA across NPT, including the partnership, undertaken between 28th June and 2nd July 2021. Also attached is a Joint Action Plan (Appendix 2) developed by the partnership (Social Services, Education, Police, Health Probation and Youth Justice) on receipt of the aforementioned JICPA Final letter (Appendix 1).

Executive Summary

The JICPA found:

'The local authority and partners (the partnership) have exercised functions under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act) and strive to ensure these make a positive contribution to the well-being and safety of children who need care and support. Their

work was supported by a positive approach to regional safeguarding arrangements with strategic managers proactive in progressing key areas.

We found suitable structures and relationships in place to facilitate effective partnership working where a child was at risk of exploitation. Statutory functions in relation to promoting safety and well-being were being fulfilled. Partners, both statutory and third sector providers such as St. Giles and Barnardo's, were working to a shared ethos of safeguarding children and young people at different levels of vulnerability. This was evident as leaders within these organisations clearly articulate a shared vision. Managers have worked purposefully across the partnership to support identification of and to tackle exploitation. We found a culture of relationship building with people at the heart of practice across organisations.

There is growing understanding across the partnership of criminal exploitation and the complex inter-relationships between this and other forms of exploitation; as well as a contextual safeguarding response bringing a relatively new dimension to the management of extra-familial harm. There is a need, however, to embed expertise about exploitation and the contextual safeguarding concept in to practice and ensure there is full understanding across professional groups.

There was evidence of effective partnership working where a child was at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE); systems were well developed to support practitioners across organisations, share information and manage risk to maximise the safety of children. Whilst multi-agency exploitation meetings provide a good forum for sharing information, these meetings need to be used more consistently to shape and adapt children's safety plans and improve the co-production of these with young people. Whilst improvement is required, work reviewed reflected the commitment, persistence and flexibility of the approaches used by staff to encourage young people's engagement.

Children's services leaders have a line of sight of front-line practice with plans leading to innovative and evolving service delivery in many

areas. Staff told us about very supportive leadership which was highly regarded. There was a culture of improvement and mutual support driven by leaders across the organisation. This has been maintained during the pandemic. Staff were forward thinking and look to research and best practice to inform their work. The local authority has not adopted a specific risk model. Staff spoken with were not aware of underpinning documents that would help provide consistency and a shared framework for understanding of risk.

The local authority has a positive approach to the management of risk where the views of children, young people and families are clearly listened to and understood. Fundamental to care and support for children in NPT, was supporting them at home and in their communities. Practitioners knew the children and families they worked with well and have ensured positive relationships were developed.

We found the local authority has worked hard to shape its services in the context of the Act. The local authority's Information, Advice and Assistance function was delivered through the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) service which provided a distinct access point for children with eligible need and for preventive interventions. There were clear pathways established to facilitate early intervention, help for families and clarity about the prevention offer, both in youth justice and social care.

Although disrupted by the pandemic, strategic partnership support for management of risk was evidenced by investment in relevant (joint) staff training across the partnership; some single agency and on-line training has been sustained during the pandemic. Robust safeguarding training delivered by the local authority has effectively supported schools to recognise early indicators of exploitation, as well as enhanced training for school staff who educate and support highly challenging young people known to be at risk.

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) has embarked on an improvement journey resulting from a poor inspection outcome for the previous

consortium arrangements in 2018. The service is now fully integrated within NPT and has a number of plans in place to address the shortcomings previously identified. Practice is improving as a result. The YOS and the police have a shared understanding of the importance of avoiding formal criminal justice outcomes for vulnerable children where appropriate.

Significant changes have occurred in the probation sector over the past year. The inspection week coincided with the launch of the new probation service resulting from the merger of the private sector community rehabilitation companies and the public sector national probation service. Many of these changes were implemented 18 months early in Wales and the new unified probation service has a head start in NPT. The size and scale of this change cannot be underestimated. The partnership needs to understand the implications of these changes and assure itself the systems and processes designed to safeguard children, are consistently and effectively implemented. This includes effective information sharing arrangements, consistent attendance at operational and strategic partnership meetings and access to briefings and training on local child safeguarding priorities, including exploitation.

Senior managers in the Swansea Neath Port Talbot Probation Delivery Unit were determined to make the new probation structures work. They recognised the challenges involved. The pandemic adds a layer of complexity and means staff cannot develop peer networks in the new organisation in the office setting that would normally take place. There are local advantages, the private and public sector organisations were previously colocated and so there are some working relationships established between staff in the two constituent agencies.

South Wales Police (SWP) demonstrated a clear commitment to child protection and tackling exploitation of children in NPT. This was evidenced by the priorities in the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Police and Crime Plan and the Chief Constable's Delivery Plan. The force was also proactive in producing and reviewing other strategic

plans and assessments in line with changing or emerging threats. The best examples of police safeguarding vulnerable children included prompt action to identify those at risk and information exchange across police teams and partners.

SWP has undertaken a programme of training to upskill staff in issues relating to vulnerable children. This has included widespread training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and a trauma informed approach under the Early Action Together Programme (EAT). More bespoke training has been provided to call handlers, custody officers and the Public Service Centre (PSC) missing person team.

School staff understood early identification, assessment, communication and intervention are vital across all stakeholders. They recognised the ongoing threat of young people being exploited and that effective safeguarding child protection work requires; robust procedures, good interagency cooperation and a workforce that is competent and confident in responding to situations. There was close working with other agencies with an ethos that was child-centred. School staff focused their work on the context in which the child and their family found themselves and recognised the needs of children on their journey to adulthood, with a commitment to ensuring quality of provision to meet these needs.

The local authority promotes a high level of inter-agency working across schools. There was evidence of close working relationships across services in supporting the needs of highly complex young people and their families. Education officers and school staff were routinely involved in safeguarding multi-agency meetings. The Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate promotes a strong culture of inclusivity. Schools access support and guidance from teams across the directorate.

We identified Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB) safeguarding leadership teams have oversight of front line healthcare services, and there were good processes in place for reporting to

appropriate governance groups and committees. We also found examples where staff described good engagement with safeguarding leads in both primary and secondary care. There was an appetite for ongoing improvements driven by safeguarding leads at both operational and corporate levels.

There was good safeguarding knowledge and awareness demonstrated across health care staff and GPs. There was good communication between different health disciplines, although some staff reported inconsistencies. Robust safeguarding processes were observed in both the Emergency Department (ED) and Minor Injuries Unit (MIU), with innovative practice developments and a strong learning culture evident. Processes to identify when a child attending either setting was subject to a care and support protection plan were in place' (JICPA: Final Letter, dated 16th September 2021 pp 3-5).

Background

'Between 28 June and 2 July 2021, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) and Estyn carried out a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Neath Port Talbot (NPT). This inspection included an evaluation of how local services responded to child exploitation.

The JICPA reviewed:

- the response to exploitation at the point of identification
- the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision-making in response to notifications and referrals
- the protection of children and young people at risk of exploitation, (evaluated through a deep dive assessment of the experiences of these children)
- the leadership and management of this work
- the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding partner arrangements in relation to this work'.

(JICPA: Final Letter, dated 16th September 2021 p1).

This report and accompanying papers is therefore shared with Cabinet for Information and Monitoring purposes only. The findings set out above will be taken forward and addressed through the Joint Action Plan, which will be overseen by the Safeguarding Board, the NPT Corporate Safeguarding Group and by each respective agency through their own over-sight committees/panels/groups. The findings will also be followed up by each Inspectorate through their future work programme.

Financial Impacts

No implications.

Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring / information purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts

No implications.

Workforce Impacts

No implications.

Legal Impacts

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts

The 'JICPA Joint Action Plan' aims to strengthen the existing response to exploitation across the partnership and in doing so reduce the risk of harm outside of the family across the County Borough.

Consultation

This item, specifically the 'JICPA Joint Action Plan', has been subject to external consultation between partner agencies.

Recommendations

That Members note and monitor that the partners will create a 'Joint Action Plan' addressing those 'Areas for Development' identified in the final letter. The broad areas identified requiring improvement across the partnership being:

- Assessments
- Outcomes
- Voice of the Child/Family
- Referrals/Reports/Communication
- Planning
- Meetings
- Response to harm outside the family home/Safeguarding
- Multi –Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
- Services
- Improve initial response to missing children reports

Reasons for Proposed Decision

This item is for Information and Monitoring only.

Implementation of Decision

As this is for information there is no implementation of decision required.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – *Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Wales National Probation Service, South Wales Police. Final Letter, dated 16th September 2021.*

Appendix 2 – *JICPA Joint Action Plan, dated 14th October 2021: Version 1.*

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