

**NEATH PORT TALBOT
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Cabinet Board

8th December, 2022

**Report of the Head of Education Development -
Chris Millis**

Matter for information

Wards Affected: All

EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an overview of safeguarding in education and outline the support work the authority undertakes in this area.

Background

2. Safeguarding, in terms of our statutory responsibility for education, is a broad term that covers the day-to-day operation of schools as well as the concerns, disclosures or allegations that may come to the attention of school staff relating to pupil harm and neglect. The Directorate has had an experienced safeguarding lead for many years providing a wide range of support to schools. Additionally, the authority has created and recruited into a new deputy which has its own responsibilities.
3. All schools in Neath Port Talbot have adopted both the local authority model safeguarding and child protection policy. This document has been developed with reference to “Welsh Government Keeping Learners Safe” guidance and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. The policy is regularly reviewed and revised in line with legislative and policy changes. Changes are disseminated widely to all schools and internal education service areas.

4. Schools and other directorate service staff are able to call on education safeguarding officers for advice and support when dealing with matters of a safeguarding or child protection nature. This includes supporting schools when children make disclosures or when staff become aware of indicators of abuse, neglect and harm. Support can involve signposting to relevant agencies or working with schools to make referrals to social services or the police. Ongoing support is provided as a referral goes through statutory social services interventions or criminal proceedings.
5. Allegations against staff of professional abuse towards children can be complex and are managed in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and Welsh Government statutory guidance. Allegations made to school staff are, in the first instance, discussed with an education safeguarding officer or other senior education officer and reported to Social Services Single Point of Contact Team (SPOC) where necessary. SPOC will consider the allegation, liaise with other agencies such as Health and Police and make a decision whether a Professional Strategy Meeting (PSM) is needed under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. PSM is a statutory multi-agency meeting that co-ordinates and shares information as part of the national procedures for managing allegations against staff.
6. Schools undertake basic fact finding when an allegation is made but must not seek to investigate as this is the role of social services and the police. Schools are supported throughout the process by the education safeguarding team and the relevant Human Resources officer. Every situation requires an individual response based on a risk assessment. The progress of allegations through the PSM process is monitored by the Education Safeguarding Reference Group which meets every three weeks.
7. Members will appreciate the need to ensure staff have access to good quality, relevant training. For the start of each school academic year a system is in place whereby the education safeguarding officer provides schools with a set of training materials which is delivered and cascaded to the whole school staff by designated safeguarding person (DSP) within each school. This ensures consistency of the message across schools and to all staff, from the Headteacher through to the teaching and all non-teaching staff. In-depth training for DSPs is delivered by the education safeguarding officer and is repeated at least every three years. For the last two years work has been undertaken to ensure all DSPs and deputies have access to the DSP training developed by the All Wales

Safeguarding in Education Group (SEG) which has been delivered via Teams because of Covid restrictions. Refresher training sessions are also offered on specific areas of interest.

8. Every governing body has a dedicated governor with responsibility for safeguarding. The local authority provides regular ongoing safeguarding training to governors as part of the termly governor training programme. Safeguarding is a standing item on governing body meeting agendas. This includes headline information on the number of cases referred to social services, number of physical interventions used, updates on safeguarding training provided to staff and any bullying and exclusion incidents.
9. On a three-year cycle the local authority undertakes safeguarding peer reviews in each of its schools which are undertaken by a team of peer reviewers; some of whom are Headteachers, Designated Safeguarding Persons, Education Support Officers and senior officers of the local authority. The Education Safeguarding Officer oversees the programme of visits and monitors the completion of any identified actions. As part of these visits, the peer reviewer will have access to the schools safer recruitment documentation and latest internal audit report. Pupil interviews are undertaken where children are asked whether they feel safe and happy in their school environment.
10. The process is largely a supportive measure, which aims to identify any deficiencies and provide an approach to rectify and assist with the development of a positive safeguarding culture that the whole school can understand and engage with. The Peer review/audit process has been used by Welsh Government via the All Wales Safeguarding Education Group (SEG) as a model when developing a school self-evaluation audit tool to roll out across Wales for reviewing safeguarding arrangements in schools and education settings.
11. Reports relating to the use of physical intervention in schools are submitted to the Child and Family Support Team on a monthly basis. These are triaged by the safeguarding officer and the Team Teach trainer so that any issues can be addressed swiftly. On a termly basis the Physical Intervention Monitoring Group (PIMG) meet to consider those reports that meet the criteria in the terms of reference. Schools have a separate policy on physical intervention, it is reviewed annually by the governing body and is consistent with Welsh Government guidance.

12. Alongside the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (VAWDASV) Welsh Government published a training framework with specific training requirements. All local authority staff and school-based staff were required to undertake group 1 e-learning. Over the last academic year the education safeguarding officer, working with a training specialist from a domestic abuse support organisation, has begun to deliver the group 2 "Ask and Act" training. This half-day training is recommended for all DSPs. Going forward full-day group 3 "Champions" training will begin to roll out.
13. Under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Prevent e-learning has been mandatory for all local authority staff. This training has helped embed the message that intervention is needed as early as possible if extreme or radical views are being shared. The Prevent duty and the associated Channel panel process is key to engaging individuals in the 'pre-criminal space' and offering a different perspective before anyone takes the step into committing any criminal offences. Schools have identified young people who are beginning to show an interest in extreme, radical views and may benefit from specialist intervention via the Channel panel. The education safeguarding officer sits on Channel panel and supports schools with making referrals if necessary.
14. In July 2021 a joint inspection of child protection arrangements (JICPA) was undertaken involving five different inspectorates; for education this included HMI Estyn. This inspection had a focus on children vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. It should be noted that the inspection report was very positive in relation to schools and the safeguarding work of the directorate. However, as part of the data gathering for the inspection it emerged there were a high number of pupils on reduced timetables. Given that the focus was around exploitation it was acknowledged that further work was needed to understand how reduced timetables were being used, whether the safeguarding of pupils when not in school had been properly considered, and if in alternative provision what safeguarding checks had been undertaken in respect of the provider.
15. The Directorate acted swiftly and created a deputy education safeguarding officer post. This new role has been given a priority focus around monitoring the use of reduced timetables and the potential safeguarding implications for children when not in school. The deputy will also conduct safeguarding checks of any external providers used by schools as part of an alternative curriculum. When necessary the deputy will provide safeguarding advice, support and training and deputise for the

safeguarding officer at any forums and meetings. The postholder commenced employment in July 2022 and has begun a data collection exercise amongst our schools in respect of reduced timetables and alternative provisions being used.

16. In response to Estyn's thematic review on the prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in schools the Local Authority has created an action plan to address the Estyn recommendations. One of those actions includes Education Safeguarding Officer and Deputy working with Barnardo's Better Futures Service to identify appropriate training to assist schools in managing these issues. A virtual training event has been arranged for November 2022, "Providing proportionate responses to children and young people who display Harmful Sexual Behaviour." This full day of training will cover harmful sexual behaviour, peer-on-peer abuse and exploitation and will help schools identify the key staff to engage in further train-the-trainer sessions to upskill them to deliver sessions to pupils in school. In addition, a safeguarding conference with a key theme of peer-on-peer abuse and sexual harassment has been arranged for March, 2023.

Financial Impact

17. There is no financial impact associated with this report.

Integrated Impact Assessment

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

Valleys Communities Impacts

19. There are no specific impacts for valley communities arising from this report.

Workforce Impacts

20. There are no direct workforce or staffing issues in relation to this report.

Legal Impacts

21. There is no legal impact in relation to this report.

Risk Management

22. There is no identified risk in relation to this report.

Consultation

23. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

24. That Members noted the update provided of the work being undertaken by the education safeguarding team.

Implementation of Decision

25. Not applicable.

Appendices

26. None.

Officer Contact

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