



Diogelu Gwent
Gwent Safeguarding

GWENT SAFEGUARDING

ANNUAL REPORT

2022 – 2023



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1. INTRODUCTION

Gwent Safeguarding Boards published a three-year strategic plan, covering the period between 2020/21 to 2022/23. This incorporates the work of both the Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB) and the South-East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB). This report provides an updated position against Year Three (2022/2023) of this Strategic Plan and remains an important means by which the Gwent Safeguarding Boards are publicly accountable for reviewing their effectiveness.

For the duration of this three-year strategic planning period, there have been considerable challenges for citizens, practitioners, service providers and communities due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and more recently the growing cost-of-living crisis, with its poverty and associated safeguarding implications. Both have caused considerable and long-lasting impact and disruption for all and it is within this context that Gwent Safeguarding Board partners have continued to work diligently to ensure that essential services have provided support and protection to children and adults.

During its preparation, all Board member agencies were offered the opportunity to inform this annual report. In addition, this report has been produced using routine information sourced from subgroup chairs and members, wider stakeholders, and practitioners.

The content of the report will cover all fourteen functions in relation to the implementation of Safeguarding Board objectives as set out in the Social Care Wales, Safeguarding Boards (General) (Wales) Regulations 2015. The purpose of this report is set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the accompanying Welsh Government Guidance - Working Together to Safeguard People Volume 1:

The purpose of annual plans and reports is twofold; it is to be a useful tool of accountability and evaluation. In this context, accountability has three components. They are:

- *Accountability to the public;*
- *Accountability to the statutory agencies from which the Safeguarding Boards' partners are drawn;*
- *Accountability to the inspectorate bodies.*

For this period, we worked towards achieving our joint overarching strategic vision, underpinned by three joint strategic priorities as follows:

One Joint Overarching Vision:

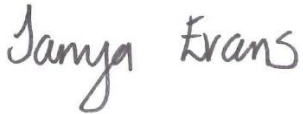
To ensure that children and adults, in Gwent, are safeguarded.

Three Joint Strategic Priorities:

- To better protect children and adults at risk of exploitation.
- To better protect children and adults from neglect, physical, emotional, sexual and financial harm.
- To improve and maintain the effectiveness of the Regional Safeguarding Board.

In that context, this report will review the progress made by both the South-East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB) and the Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB), over the past year, giving a summary of the activity of the groups, work streams, as well as the learning that serve to support the strategic safeguarding framework of the region.

At the conclusion of this three-year period, we reflect on the Boards' journey and we cannot disregard the significant backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, throughout this time. As a result of this, resilience continues to remain an amplified feature within all of the work which we have done throughout this period as we continue to face often more complex safeguarding challenges. However, the longer-term, more persistent factors such as workforce capacity continue to highlight the challenges for practitioners and service providers who have worked diligently over the last period to safeguard children and adults in Gwent. A lack of resources within the sector itself combined with the impact of wider austerity on services continues to create significant concerns in terms of safeguarding children and adults. When combined with emerging economic factors such as the cost-of-living challenges and the likely impact that this will have upon the wellbeing and safety of citizens, this means that building capacity and resilience remains critical across the spectrum of our work.



Tanya Evans
Chair
SEWSCB



Jane Rodgers
Chair
GwASB

2. LIST OF GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD MEMBERS

Membership

The membership of each Board is as follows:

SOUTHEAST WALES SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

Chair / Director SSD	Blaenau Gwent C.B.C.
Vice Chair / Head of Children's Services	Caerphilly C.B.C.
Paediatrician	A.B.U.H.B
Named Doctor	A.B.U.H.B
Head of Safeguarding	A.B.U.H.B.
Lead Consultant	A.B.U.H.B (Public Health Team)
Assistant Director	Barnardo's
Service Manager	Blaenau Gwent C.B.C
Head of Children's Services	Blaenau Gwent C.B.C.
Corporate Director of Education	Blaenau Gwent C.B.C.
Head of Community Services	Bron Afon Community Housing
Service Manager	Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent YOS representing Gwent YOT's
Chief Officer Education	Caerphilly C.B.C
Senior Solicitor, Legal Services	Caerphilly C.B.C
Service Manager Safeguarding	Caerphilly C.B.C.
Chief Executive Officer	GAVO
Head of Operations	GDAS
Head of PPU	Gwent Police
Head of PDU	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
Head of Children's Services	Monmouthshire C.C.
Safeguarding Service Manager	Monmouthshire C.C
Housing & Communities Manager	Monmouthshire C.C.
Chief Education Officer	Monmouthshire C.C.
NISB member	National Independent Safeguarding Board
Children's Services, Service Manager	Newport C.C
Chief Education Officer	Newport C.C.
Head of Children's Services	Newport C.C.
Deputy Crime Commissioner	Gwent Police & Crime Commissioner
Designated Doctor	National Safeguarding Service, Public Health Wales
Designated Nurse	National Safeguarding Service, Public Health Wales
Business Manager	Regional Safeguarding Business Unit
Group Manager	Torfaen C.B.C
Head of Children's Services	Torfaen C.B.C
Deputy Director, Education	Torfaen C.B.C
Senior Executive Officer	Torfaen Voluntary Alliance
Regional Adviser	VAWDASV Regional Team
Head of Safeguarding	Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

GWENT-WIDE ADULT SAFEGUARDING BOARD

Chair / Director, SSD	Monmouthshire C.B.C.
Vice Chair / Head of Safeguarding	A.B.U.H.B.
Lead Consultant	A.B.U.H.B. (Public Health Team)
Service Manager	Blaenau Gwent C.B.C
Head of Adult Services	Blaenau Gwent C.B.C.
Service Manager Safeguarding	Caerphilly C.B.C.
Head of Adult Services	Caerphilly C.B.C.
Head of Active Ageing	Derwen Cymru (part of POBL Group)
Chief Executive Officer	GAVO
Head of Operations	GDAS
Head of PPU	Gwent Police
Head of Residence and Safety	H.M.P. Usk
Head of PDU	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
Safeguarding Service Manager	Monmouthshire C.C
Head of Housing	Monmouthshire C.C.
Head of Adult Services	Monmouthshire C.C.
NISB member	National Independent Safeguarding Board
Service Manager	Newport C.C
Head of Adult Services	Newport C.C.
Deputy Crime Commissioner	Gwent Police & Crime Commissioner
Designated Doctor	National Safeguarding Service, Public Health Wales
Designated Nurse	National Safeguarding Service, Public Health Wales
Business Manager	Regional Safeguarding Business Unit
Head of Education	South Wales Fire Service
Group Manager	Torfaen C.B.C
Head of Adult Services	Torfaen C.B.C.
Regional Adviser	VAWDASV Regional Team
Head of Safeguarding	Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

3. HOW DOES THE BOARD EXECUTE ITS STATUTORY DUTIES AND ACHIEVE AGAINST ITS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

As we conclude our three-year strategic plan, this report will consider the Boards' three joint strategic priorities and accompanying focus areas, which are listed below in Section 4. We will also consider any achievements and gaps against the Boards' priority focus areas and outcomes, as well as its fourteen statutory functions and core responsibilities¹ of Safeguarding Boards which are listed within the Welsh Government document 'Working Together to Safeguard People Volume 1 – Introduction and Overview'.

Section 4 will set out what work has been carried out against each strategic priority focus area and what outcomes have been achieved or are intended to carry over into the next period. By way of an introduction to the Board diagram below and to Section 4 itself, we want to use this section to outline how the Board maximises its structure to execute its statutory duties and achieve its strategic priorities.

Gwent Safeguarding Boards reap the benefits from their strong partnership networks. This past year has seen a considerable change in key personnel across both Board and subgroups. Despite this, we have strived to maintain existing alliances and maximise opportunities to create new relationships with key partners to ensure effective collaboration across the strategic regional safeguarding partnership structure.

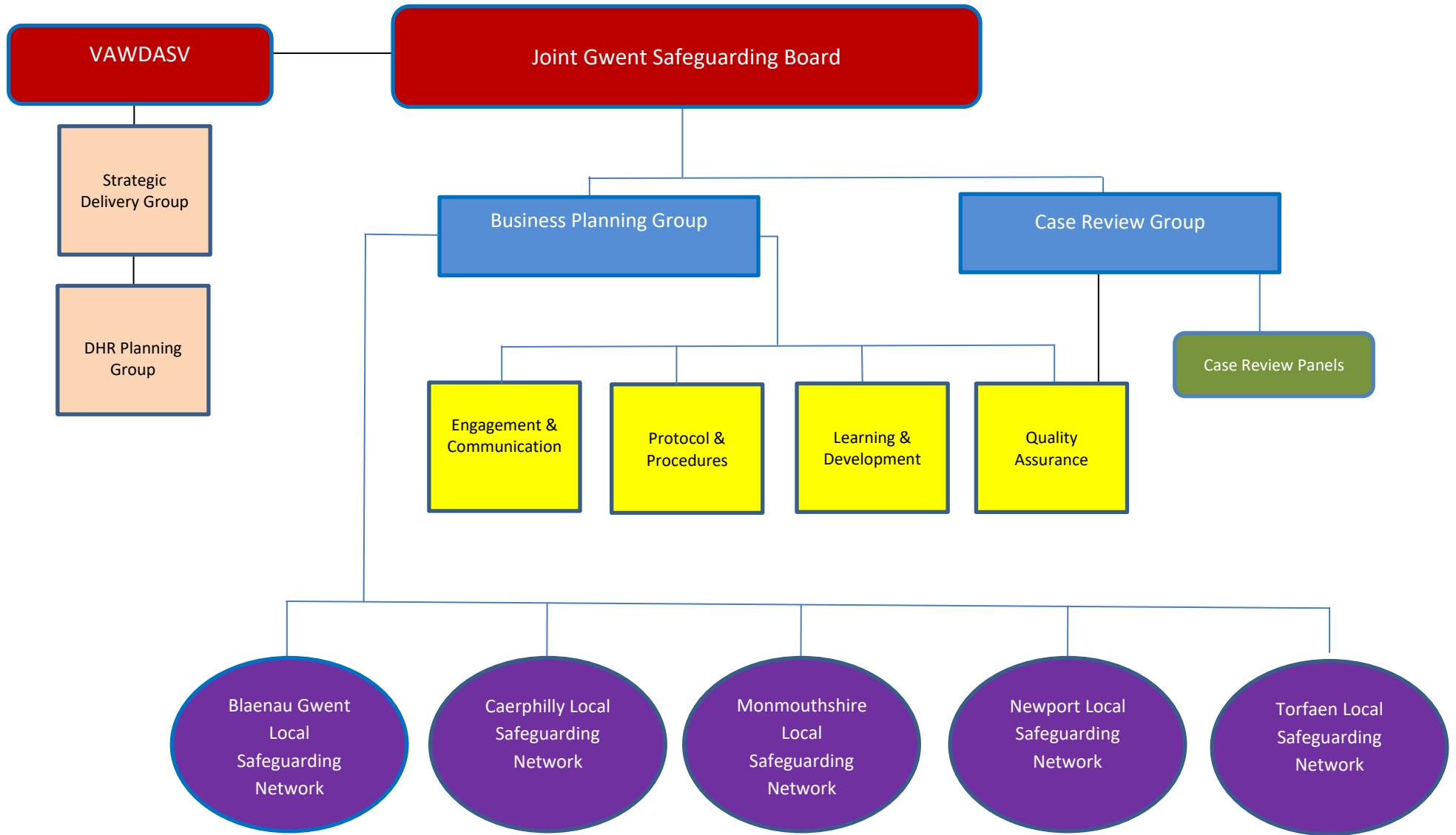
With reference to the diagram below, the Board and subgroup structure enables the Safeguarding Board to devolve certain statutory duties to dedicated Board subgroups. For example, the Case Review Group, which as a senior subgroup, supports the Board by delivering on the statutory function to consider all referrals for child and adult practice reviews. This group ensures that all reviews are appropriately resourced and that strategic and operational action plans are co-ordinated and managed effectively. A further example is the Business Planning Group which is another senior subgroup and provides support to the Board by overseeing the progress against the relevant subgroup work plans, across the region. This group is critical in facilitating a free flow of communication between local groups, subgroups and Boards. Our four subgroups provide oversight for specific Board statutory functions. Examples include the Protocols and Procedures subgroup and the Engagement and Communication subgroup, with each of the four subgroups having clear terms of reference and work plans, which link directly to the three-year strategic plan. Our Local Safeguarding Networks also remain critical in providing the Board with an understanding and reach into local areas. Quarterly updates are reported from all subgroups through the Business Planning Group to the Boards. This ensures that the Boards' core statutory responsibilities and strategic priorities are overseen and acted upon by a dedicated, multi-agency group of key safeguarding partners.

Our Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan ensures that there is clear direction for each of the Boards' subgroups on who will achieve what against each of the strategic priority focus areas. There will often be multiple activity undertaken by various subgroups against each priority focus area and at times, where emerging or amplified safeguarding priorities appear, then these are built into the overall programme of work. A significant amount of activity takes place between each Board and sub-group meeting, where a

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/working-together-to-safeguard-people-volume-i-introduction-and-overview.pdf>

number of multi-agency task and finish groups strive to achieve its stated outcomes. This continues to be successful as wider, more specialist groups of practitioners can then contribute to the work of the Boards.

Gwent Safeguarding Boards Strategic Structure



4. HOW WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED OUR ANNUAL PLAN AND ACHIEVED OUR OUTCOMES

There are three joint strategic priorities which set the direction of work that is undertaken by Gwent Safeguarding Boards during the course of its three-year plan. Beneath each joint strategic priority sit six priority focus areas against which action is taken to achieve the outcomes. The priorities and focus areas for the three-year period between 2020 and 2023 are listed below, along with the achievements or identified areas for continued work. For more information on the priorities, focus areas and outcomes, please follow this link to our Strategic Plan. [GWENT SAFEGUARDING Strategic Plan 2020-2023 Year 3 FINAL FOR PUBLICATION](#)

Joint Strategic Priority 1 – To better protect children and adults at risk of exploitation

Safeguarding Focus Area 1 – Exploitation

In agreement with Welsh Government, we continue to utilise the Child Exploitation Measurement Toolkit as a regional framework and toolkit to support practitioners in understanding and responding to exploitation, whilst a national template is developed and implemented. Our Board partner agencies have continued to benefit from the multi-agency, integrated safeguarding hub arrangements across the region. This intends to promote early consultation with relevant agencies, more effective information-sharing as well as timely, 'live' decision-making in relation to all those who may be at risk of harm, including potential exploitation. This year, all five Local Authorities in Gwent have continued to be involved in a Home Office pilot to test and promote local decision-making about children who are victims of modern slavery in a way which complements existing safeguarding structures.

As demonstrated by the training summary table in Section 10, this year we have commissioned and delivered a number of specialist training sessions relating to child and adult exploitation. As an identified outcome indicator for this focus area, this has offered a wide range of practitioner learning experiences within the region, including criminal exploitation, gang behaviours and exploitation of adults. The regional Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings continue to provide oversight of child exploitation cases. The transition of these regional meetings from child sexual exploitation to child exploitation, as a broader theme, was an identified outcome indicator and enables the region to share intelligence on linked cases, locations of concern and case escalations. The Boards' Business Planning Sub-Group continues to receive quarterly reports in relation to the regional MACE meetings, outlining the numbers of children being considered as part of these meetings as well themes and emerging trends. These steps have enabled us to achieve against the outcome indicators within this priority area, by enabling a better-informed workforce, with access to robust systems and resources which are designed to help protect children and adults from exploitation in Gwent. However, we intend to continue to focus on exploitation in the next period.

Safeguarding Focus Area 2 - Child Sexual Abuse

This year, the Boards' Business Planning Group oversaw the region's final report to Welsh Government on achievements against the National Action Plan for Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse. To ensure continued improvement in this area, the Boards set out a programme of work that is overseen by a strategic task group and includes regional awareness-raising, training and audit work. As demonstrated by the training summary table in Section 10, this year, the Boards have re-commissioned a series of practitioner workshops this year from the Centre of Expertise for Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). The purpose of this training was to support

multi-agency practitioners to improve their understanding of child sexual abuse within the family environment and help them to better identify signs and indicators and respond effectively to protect children.

Using the quarterly data reports which are provided by Local Authorities to the Quality Assurance subgroup, the Board is aware that the numbers of children who are registered under the category of sexual abuse have remained consistently one of the lowest registration categories this year. We are aware from awareness-raising workshops with the CSA Centre of Expertise that this is largely the case across Wales and that the prevalence of child sexual abuse remains high, despite potentially being under-reported or under-identified. Therefore, this work will carry on into the next strategic plan as a priority focus, given the region's commitment to improve our service response to child sexual abuse. The steps taken to achieve our outcomes in improving awareness of this harm and identifying areas for further practice / system development will help to improve the identification, prevention and response to child sexual abuse, in Gwent.

Safeguarding Focus Area 3 - Transitional Pathways

In previous years, Gwent Safeguarding Boards made links with other regional groups in an attempt to gather and review evidence about how transition in Gwent is working and how lessons can be learned to improve transition services. These introductions helped the Boards to adopt a more collaborative approach to establishing links between children's and adult services. Work has taken place as a region to adopt a transitions policy for learners to support vulnerable children and young people when transitioning from school into college. As we review our suite of regional training courses, in light of the national safeguarding training framework and standards, we will ensure that the area of supported transitions is highlighted. Learning which has started to emerge from Immediate Response Groups has helped to highlight the issue of transitional safeguarding and the associated challenges for vulnerable children and young people who need enhanced support from adult services. Although the Board has made steps in achieving its outcomes to bring agencies together to better safeguard young people into adulthood, it recognises that there is more to be done. This is particularly in relation to developing a set of guiding principles and supporting partners to be better equipped in working with children who are transitioning into adulthood in order to make a greater impact.

Safeguarding Focus Area 4 - Liberty Protection Safeguards

The team who leads on the regional implementation of the new Liberty Protection Safeguards framework have continued to engage with the Gwent Safeguarding Boards, to ensure that the impact of these forthcoming changes can be fully anticipated. We have provided a dedicated page on the Boards' website which explains the planned changes in legislation, provides updates and links relating to the plans for UK and Welsh Government consultations and provides contact details for anyone wishing to find out more. This enables Board members to anticipate and manage changes and clearly see where to go for further advice. This year, Gwent Safeguarding Boards have provided endorsement of this collaborative working within the Mental Capacity Act Regional Strategy and Operational Training Plan. This work has helped in achieving the outcome for this area by developing a mechanism to assure the Board that the forthcoming Liberty Protection Safeguards legislative changes are effectively implemented, which will ultimately better safeguard citizens under this legislation. During the publication period for this annual report, the UK Government confirmed that they are not progressing the implementation of the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 and the Liberty Protection Safeguards within this Parliament. However, the work that has been done in Gwent to date has been invaluable in raising awareness and understanding of the Mental Capacity Act. The resources on the Boards' website will be adapted to reflect this and to emphasise that the work remains relevant and informative.

Safeguarding Focus Area 5 - Contextual Safeguarding

By raising awareness and effectively promoting the ways in which professionals, adults and young people can change environments and social conditions in which abuse has occurred, the Boards have intended to improve the safeguarding outcomes of people within these contexts. In previous years, in order to achieve the outcome for this particular focus area, a series of tiered awareness-raising sessions were commissioned as an introduction to Contextual Safeguarding and Extra-Familial Abuse for Board members, senior managers and practitioners across the region. We have continued to raise awareness around this subject area. This has included the development and dissemination of a bitesize learning campaign sharing resources from the Contextual Safeguarding Network from the University of Bedfordshire. This was intended to expand regional understanding for professionals about the way in which contexts and social conditions can have a direct impact on the way abuse occurs for adults and young people. However, the Boards consider that further work is required in the next strategic plan period in respect of safeguarding as it relates to the context or environment around the child, young person or adult.

Safeguarding Focus Area 6 - Financial Abuse

As demonstrated by the training summary table in Section 10, this year, we have offered training in relation to financial abuse across our region, which has helped to achieve the outcomes of improved practitioner competence and confidence in relation to this harm. To ensure that we target citizens who may have limited access to online services or are harder-to-reach, we have designed and printed Financial Abuse leaflets for dissemination across our region. Our Quality Assurance subgroup designed an audit tool and used this to undertake a regional audit in order to help us to better understand the current themes in relation to financial abuse and to see what impact the pandemic and current economic pressures might have had on this particular subject. This intends to improve our partners' ability to better support and safeguard people who are at risk of financial abuse and this work is ongoing and will continue into the next strategic planning period.

Joint Strategic Priority 2: To better protect children and adults from neglect, physical, emotional, sexual and financial harm

Safeguarding Focus Area 1 – Elder domestic abuse

Over the course of this three-year plan, we have developed and published the regional Multi-Agency Practice Guidance for Dealing with Cases of Domestic Abuse to Safeguard Adults with Care and Support Needs which has enabled us to achieve the intended outcome of promoting positive improvements for adults at risk in relation to elder domestic abuse. As outlined in the training summary table in Section 10, we commissioned a specialist provider to develop and, in time, to deliver Mental Capacity Act, Domestic Abuse, Coercive Control and Adults at Risk Training. This enables us to improve practitioner awareness of the connections between adult safeguarding and domestic abuse. This year, we have enhanced our regional guidance on Adult Protection and Support Orders (APSOs), which was developed as a recommendation from an Adult Practice Review, by including an exemplar APSO as part of the guidance.

In conjunction with our VAWDASV colleagues, we have published our Coercive Control guide following an adult practice review where elder domestic abuse and coercive control were prevalent themes. During National Safeguarding Week this year, we used the online forums as an opportunity to undertake an evaluation on the Coercive Control guidance. On the whole, it appeared to be well-received by practitioners, but feedback suggested that there was more work to be done in order to increase awareness of this guidance, across all

agencies. By improving awareness of the connections between adult safeguarding and domestic abuse and in understanding how to better support the most vulnerable groups, we have attempted to improve practice in safeguarding older people from domestic abuse. In terms of emerging learning from practice reviews and multi-agency professional forums, the Boards consider a future priority focus should be whole family domestic abuse, to enable a wider spectrum and focus of activity.

Safeguarding Focus Area 2 - Mental Health

The learning themes from Immediate Response Groups and child practice reviews suggested that child or adolescent suicide / self-harm was a concern. As a response, we established a strategic child suicide group to identify areas for improvement in conjunction with our regional suicide and self-harm prevention leads. We continue to ensure a joined-up approach with partnerships who have shared mental health priorities. One example includes extending an invitation to the ABUHB Public Health Consultant Lead for suicide to become a Safeguarding Board member. Another example has been the comprehensive review of the Partnership Protocol for the Immediate Response to Critical Incidents Involving Children and Young People. By applying learning from Immediate Response Groups and using the expertise of our partners, we have included reference to essential resources for services who support young people in the face of critical incidents, as well as access to more universal, medium-term community support once the immediate response has concluded.

As outlined in Section 10, we have continued to re-commission our Suicide & Self Harm training to offer a blended learning experience for practitioners in working with adolescents in crisis. In addition, we have commissioned training relating to Self-neglect, Mental Capacity Act and Hoarding to support practitioners when working with adults who are experiencing mental health issues. This assures us that work had taken place to achieve the intended outcome of improving the understanding of suicide / self-harm across a multi-agency workforce in order to better safeguard citizens. However, it remains clear that more work is required in this area for our forthcoming plan.

Safeguarding Focus Area 3 - Falls

Throughout this three-year period, partners were keen to scope out any planned work relating to falls prevention across the region and opted for the promotion of pre-existing resources which are already in use within 'expert' agencies, such as our Health Board colleagues. We promoted the resources which were developed by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales within this three-year plan to assist practitioners with falls prevention work. This enabled us to promote preventative strategies which are intended to support practitioners to reduce instances of falls, as the intended outcome for this area.

Safeguarding Focus Area 4 – Skin Management

Our Adult Safeguarding Thresholds Guidance ensures that our regional response to keeping people safe is appropriate and proportionate to the abuse/neglect identified, which includes harm relating to skin management. This enabled us to work towards the intended outcome of developing and promoting appropriate guidance and tools to raise awareness of effective skin management. This will enable improvements in practitioner responses to this type of harm and ultimately enable practitioners to better safeguard those at risk. For the forthcoming period, we intend to consider whether more can be done to promote the use and application of this guidance as partnership feedback indicates that it is not as well-used as we would like by our range of agencies.

Safeguarding Focus Area 5 - Neglect

Whilst we recognised the priority focus of neglect at the outset of this three-year plan, it appears to have become more amplified over the course of this three-year plan, which may be the result of the cost-of-living crisis and associated poverty implications. A data dashboard has been developed to enable the Board to understand the numbers of neglect referrals and categories of registration by Local Authority. This has enabled the Board to confirm the prevalence and persistence of neglect cases in the region. Within the three-year period of this plan, a multi-agency working group was established to consider emerging issues and themes in relation to child neglect. Our intended outcomes have centred on the development of a regional neglect toolkit and access to a neglect training resource, which both support practitioners to understand the types and consequences of neglect and be equipped to work with children, young people and adults who are at risk of, or experiencing, neglect.

As can be seen from Section 10, our existing Working with Child Neglect training course is in line to be re-developed as a blended learning resource for future delivery. This section also demonstrates that this year we commissioned specialist sessions in relation to this subject to continue to learn from experts in this field and to ensure that our resources are current in terms of research. As a result of the growing cost-of-living crisis, the likely significant impact upon families and services along with the associated safeguarding implications, although some of the intended outcomes have been achieved, we will ensure that neglect continues to be responded to as a safeguarding concern.

Safeguarding Focus Area 6 – Commissioning of Care

Over the course of the last three years, the lessons which were learned from regional adult practice reviews in relation to the commissioning of care have been shared with care home forums and providers, across Gwent. These improved links with care home providers now continue as core business for our Quality Assurance subgroup, which ensures that safeguarding mechanisms are in place and adhered to whilst care is commissioned, enabling us to achieve our intended outcomes in this area. In order to further share lessons learned from Operation Jasmine, in June we cascaded information emerging from the national, multi-agency, facilitated online reflection and learning event. We continue to consider how this learning should inform our provision of safeguarding training and awareness-raising campaigns.

Joint Strategic Priority 3 – To improve and maintain the effectiveness of the Regional Safeguarding Board.

Safeguarding Focus Area 1 – Wales Safeguarding Procedures implementation

In order to ensure effective and timely awareness-raising of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures to practitioners across the region, during this three-year period we commissioned awareness-raising sessions and developed supplementary resources which were rolled out across the region to almost 400 multi-agency staff. To complement the implementation of these procedures we continue to develop a fully compliant suite of regional protocols and practice guides. We have further supplemented the resources which we developed in relation to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, and we have shared briefing videos which we commissioned in order to reinforce our awareness-raising activities. We have also placed these on our website to offer a refresher or induction tool for multi-agency staff across the region. By successfully implementing the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, the citizens in Gwent can be better supported and protected as an outcome. Alignment with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures is part of our core business instead of a specific priority focus area.

Safeguarding Focus Area 2 - Practice reviews

In section 10 of this report, we outline the numbers of practice reviews which were commissioned, published or were ongoing, last year. We outline some of the emerging learning themes which have helped to identify where we need to focus our attention in the forthcoming period. The summary table in section 10 also sets out how we delivered chair and reviewer training last year in order to maintain a pool of suitably trained reviewers to undertake child and adult practice reviews. Our Case Review Group and Quality Assurance Subgroup remain well-established and well-resourced to oversee this statutory responsibility which enables the Boards to learn lessons from practice and process and to identify where improvements may be required in order to better safeguard citizens. In addition, Gwent Safeguarding Boards continue to fully engage with the work programme for the national Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR) process in order to ensure that we can prepare for the changes which will be brought about by the new model of safeguarding reviews in Wales.

Safeguarding Focus Area 3 - Performance management

The Boards have a range of assurance processes, both routine and responsive, which enable partners to demonstrate their effective safeguarding arrangements and for the strategic Board to identify or monitor any areas for development. Some examples of our routine assurance processes are quarterly Local Authority data collection, multi-agency audits and monitoring PRUDiCS (Procedural Response to Unexpected Deaths in Childhood). Some examples of responsive assurance processes are practice reviews / multi-agency professional forums, complaints panels and Immediate Response Groups. These processes enable the Boards to understand the nature and extent of safeguarding issues in Gwent and to identify where safeguarding practice or process is working well or where there is a need to improve.

As a routine process, Gwent Safeguarding Boards receive data reports from all five Local Authorities, which is scrutinised by partners in order to understand any differences or quarterly trends. For example, the data includes the numbers and categories of children on the child protection register and the numbers and primary categories of referrals for adults at risk of abuse and neglect. The Board uses these reports to request context, and potentially further examination, from Local Authorities, where spikes or unexpected trends have emerged. We have plans to extend this into a multi-agency data report. This year, we have worked closely with our Public Health Wales partners to adapt the Safeguarding Maturity Matrix tool, which will assist partners in measuring their own effectiveness in safeguarding adults and children. We are currently working on an implementation plan to roll out this annual multiagency self-assessment in the forthcoming period.

We have worked closely with the National Independent Safeguarding Board and other regional safeguarding boards to inform the development of a National Multi-agency Safeguarding Performance Framework prototype, which is to be trialled in the next period. Overall, these activities have helped us to work towards our intended outcomes within the plan to satisfy the Board that safeguarding activities carried out by its partner agencies are effective and help to support and safeguard citizens. However, there is more to be done in terms of building a multi-agency quality assurance and performance framework across the Gwent region. We will continue to work closely with our partners to achieve this.

Safeguarding Focus Area 4 - Partnership working

We maintain effective links with other regional partnerships, including the Regional Partnership Board and the Public Service Board. This has helped us to consider the governance processes and reporting mechanisms together with representation at Board meetings to attempt to streamline and reduce duplication. An example of effective partnership working has been demonstrated this year, by working closely with our regional suicide and

self-harm prevention leads to respond, in a coordinated way, to themes emerging from IRGs and child practice reviews which relate to suicide and self-harm.

We continue to work closely with our VAWDASV colleagues. Examples of this include routine updates at respective Boards, sharing a website and collaborative efforts in relation to mutual priorities, such as events during National Safeguarding Week. In addition, we have had a range of guest speakers from partner agencies who have engaged with the Board, either at Board, subgroup level or within our Local Safeguarding Network meetings. This enhances our strategic awareness of parallel priorities and helps to identify opportunities for a more collaborative approach to safeguarding in order to improve positive outcomes for more citizens in the region. Partnership working remains at the heart of all of the work we will do in the next period.

Safeguarding Focus Area 5 - Safeguarding Board resilience

The past three years have brought about great challenges for Gwent Safeguarding Board partners, who have continued to demonstrate their resilience. The Board's strategic plan continues to be supported by an implementation plan which provides the required actions, timescales and ownership to effectively assign, align and deliver all work priorities for the Board and its subgroups. This provides a useful tool in promoting an interface between the different groups who are all guided by the same strategic priorities. We intend to continue to work closely with the single unified safeguarding review leads to ensure that we have appropriate resources / capacity to accommodate the future increase in safeguarding reviews. The identified outcomes for this area have been achieved although the maintenance of a resilient Safeguarding Board will be an ongoing priority in order to continue to effectively set the strategic direction for safeguarding and to carry out core functions in relation to multi-agency safeguarding for Gwent citizens. Within the future plan, the Board is keen to ensure that the issue of resilience is extended to consider workforce and services given the aforementioned acute challenges that have arisen over the past year.

Safeguarding Focus Area 6 - Voice of the Service User

Over the last three years, our Engagement and Communication Subgroup has developed and published an engagement and communication strategy. It is fully supported by its annual campaign calendar and works closely with other subgroups to identify meaningful engagement or communication opportunities. This strategic approach has enabled the Group to have greater oversight on all communication and engagement activity and to identify and access other engagement opportunities within all Board subgroups or partnership forums. The Engagement and Communication Subgroup has undertaken work this year to consider surveys, in relation to scope, resourcing, required expertise, processing and analysing quantitative / qualitative data, and the varying methodologies. The group continues to consider options such as outsourcing and other collaborative opportunities, in a way that reflects National Participation Standards. Our multi-agency Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults training both separately raise awareness of advocacy, including where legal requirement applies, amongst other critical aspects of effective safeguarding practice and procedure. Our outcomes intended to identify opportunities to improve citizen involvement in the work of the Board in order that service user voices can help to plan and shape safeguarding practice and processes in Gwent.

Our future plans to work closely with our VAWDASV colleagues to take part in a Communities of Practice event for practitioners and to support a conference for young people, will enable us to better understand the voice of the service user, as a priority in the next period.

5. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SAFEGUARDING BOARDS IN THE PAST YEAR

There are some examples of Gwent Safeguarding Boards achievements for 2022/2023 which have been set out below and highlight our 'good news' stories which the Boards feel continues to demonstrate the breadth of its work over the past year:

1. We have maintained, and continue to develop, a viable delivery group for **offering 'in-house' training** which has been expanded this year and we have commissioned **specialist training**. This has enabled us to offer training on **12 different safeguarding topics**.

2. Board members came together in person in October 2022, at a **Development Session**, to reflect on the achievements and areas for further work. This provided Board partners with the chance to consider the opportunities, challenges and learning of the past year and to reflect upon the Boards' future priorities.

3. During 2022/2023, we undertook adult and child **practice reviews** in line with one of our core statutory functions. We completed and disseminated the learning from a number of reviews and Multi-Agency Professional Forums, which are outlined in further detail in section 10 of this report. We have ongoing, and newly commissioned reviews / MAPFs which will continue into the next financial year. In addition, we have delivered further regional reviewer training ensuring that trained reviewers are available in Gwent.

4. Our two Domestic Homicide-Adult Practice Review pilots have continued to generate learning around how the Domestic Homicide Review process can be aligned more closely with the Adult Practice Review methodology. The benefit will be a less onerous process for families and more timely learning for practitioners. This work has enabled Gwent to continue to inform the national **Single Unified Safeguarding Review** programme throughout the course of the last year.

5. As part of **National Safeguarding Week**, our region collaborated with police, Barnardo's, BAWSO and other partners to deliver a series of virtual multi-agency events, under the theme of 'Contemporary Safeguarding.' These set out to raise awareness in relation to online harms and technology-facilitated abuse and exploitation, amongst others.

6. We continue to deliver core business for both Boards. This includes taking a coordinated, **active role in the consultation, adoption or implementation of any newly developed initiatives or procedures.** Examples of this include our ongoing involvement on the Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, our support of the national review of Section 5 of the Procedures and our regional consultation exercises for both the National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework and the draft action plan to end the abuse and neglect of older people in Wales. This demonstrates our appetite to work with our colleagues across Wales, and being advised by front line practitioners, service users and families.

7. Our online **Local Safeguarding Network** meetings and six-monthly practitioner forum events continue to be popular. These events are critical to the work of the strategic Safeguarding Board as they ensure a local connection exists with our local practitioners and service providers. We take pride in listening to our Local Safeguarding Network partners to ensure that the subject areas are most pertinent to the local area.

9. Board members supported the roadshows in our region which were set up by Welsh Government in order to raise awareness about the legislative changes aimed at **Ending Physical Punishment in Wales** last year.

8. During National Safeguarding Week, our region supported and promoted the launch of the **National Safeguarding Standards and Training Framework**, which enables the regional safeguarding boards to ensure a consistent national approach to training, learning and development.

10. This year, our Learning & Development Sub Group hosted an event to promote **'Embedding Learning into Practice.'** This helped to improve our understanding of the process of 'Learning Transfer' in all that we do as a Board. We also understood the important of exploring how, in addition to training, we also need to be assured that learning is applied, and as a result of any learning application, behaviours are modified and outcomes are improved.

6. WHO WE HAVE WORKED COLLABORATIVELY WITH TO SAFEGUARD PEOPLE IN GWENT

We continue to work collaboratively with a range of agencies, other partnerships and forums to enable us to deliver our objectives to date. These include:

- Gwent Police;
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board;
- Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service;
- Public Health Wales;
- Prison Services;
- Fire and Rescue Service;
- Gwent Drug and Alcohol Services;
- Office of the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner;
- Gwent Registered Social Landlords.

From our Five Local Authority Areas – Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen

- Education;
- Children's Services;
- Adult Services;
- Statutory Housing Providers;
- Youth Offending Services.

We have strong working links with other regional and national partnerships:

- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV);
- Regional Partnership Board;
- National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISB);
- Welsh Government;
- All Other Welsh Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards.

Throughout the course of this year, Gwent Safeguarding Boards and the subgroups have continued to receive a number of online presentations and briefings from a diverse range of partners. This demonstrates our consistent efforts to work collaboratively with others and to remain informed and engaged with other parallel safeguarding agendas across the region. These include:

- Annual Report (Public Health Wales)
- Gwent Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention (Public Health Team, ABUHB)
- Liberty Protection Safeguards Implementation Update (Gwent DoLS Lead)
- Mental Capacity Act Handbook (Newport Adult Services)

As a continuing priority from the forthcoming period, we intend to work with partners to plan how we can better engage with citizens in the coming period to ensure that, whether virtually or in person, we can enable the Board to be kept informed by our service users.

7. BOARD MEMBER AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS

This year, Gwent Safeguarding Board partners have continued to demonstrate their commitment and dedication to the work of the Boards through their consistent and active participation in Board and subgroup meetings. This has enabled the Boards to continue to respond to the challenges faced by its partner agencies. By maintaining connections and relationships with other strategic partnerships, the Boards have ensured that safeguarding has remained a priority consideration when working through significant challenges such as the cost-of-living crises and workforce capacity which are being presented to services in our region.

We continue to use resources from all constituent Board agencies and many other partners to support the work of the Boards throughout the past year, which is in turn driven by its strategic priorities and implementation plan. In addition, we continue to rely on agencies to provide individuals to work with the Gwent Safeguarding Business Unit and to provide Chairs and Vice-Chairs for our groups.

Chairing and Vice-Chairing arrangements for our groups is sourced from:

SEWSCB	GwASB
Blaenau Gwent Social Services Caerphilly Children’s Services	Monmouthshire Social Services Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
CASE REVIEW GROUP	BUSINESS PLANNING GROUP
Gwent Police Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service	Caerphilly Safeguarding Team Newport Safeguarding Team
PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES	JOINT QUALITY ASSURANCE GROUP
Torfaen Children’s Services Monmouthshire County Council	Monmouthshire Safeguarding Team Caerphilly Adult Services Caerphilly Children’s Services
ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION	LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
Monmouthshire Children’s Services	Monmouthshire County Council

Gwent Safeguarding Board continues to offer a suite of safeguarding training to its partners. Our Training Delivery Group uses our partner resources to develop, review and facilitate our joint Boards’ generic training programme. We rely upon these resources to ‘do more with less’ in respect of the amount of training that we are able to deliver to practitioners. Partners have invested considerable time into the re-development of our training programme to ensure that it can provide a blended learning experience, be delivered virtually where required and comply with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. This enables us to continue to offer a range of safeguarding training, delivered by multi-agency partners, to cross-sector practitioners working with children and adults at risk and also to commission bespoke training where priority needs are identified. All partner agencies of the Boards have committed to this resource, which we count as a major contribution to the Boards’ business.

We continue to rely on the resources provided by agencies and partners to chair and provide reviewers for both child and adult practice reviews and Multi Agency Professional Forums (MAPF). We have been fortunate to

utilise staff from Gwent Police, Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Safeguarding Team, all five Local Authority Safeguarding Teams, Monmouthshire and Torfaen YOS, and Children’s and Adult Services in the review processes that are currently active or are planned for the forthcoming year.

We continue to rely heavily on the help and support of the Safeguarding Service Managers from each of the five Local Authority areas across Gwent as they each Chair their own Local Safeguarding Network (LSN) Meetings and head up their six monthly LSN Practitioner Forum events. The LSN events have also become integral to National Safeguarding Week here in Gwent These present an opportunity for the Boards to showcase learning and awareness-raising opportunities as well as providing opportunities to conduct practitioner surveys using the high virtual ‘footfall’.

Across Gwent, the way that the Boards and their subgroups function remains a real example of multi-agency working at its best. Without the commitment and contribution from Board members, agencies and partners, the work of the Boards at its current level would not be possible.

8. USE OF RESOURCES

The Boards are funded by contributions from statutory partner agencies who have agreed the funding formula as set out in the Welsh Government document ‘Working Together to Safeguard People Volume 1 – Introduction and Overview’, the guidance which accompanies the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

This funding resources a regional safeguarding business unit consisting of a Business Manager, Development Officers and Administrative staff who provide support for both Children and Adult Boards, the subgroups, and the Local Safeguarding Networks.

The Boards also provide an extensive multi-agency regional training programme. This consists of generic safeguarding courses, which enable free access for practitioners and volunteers across the region. They are designed to complement and add value to the training provided by workforce development teams in the region.

The specific costs for this support during 2022/2023 are set out below:

Total costs	£	410,316
Staff costs	£	340,165
Day to day running costs	£	19,302
Provision of Multi-Agency Training and Practice Reviews	£	41,509
Engagement / Websites & Publicity / Professional events (Including National Safeguarding Week)	£	9,340

It is acknowledged that resources used to support the work of the Regional Safeguarding Boards are not confined or restricted to financial contributions from statutory partner agencies. The Regional Safeguarding Board Chairs, Board Members, Subgroup Chairs and members provide a significant amount of their time to support the Boards and their work. This is often in addition to their identified professional roles and day to day responsibilities. The

variable and diverse nature of the Boards' work makes this difficult to report on within a quantifiable and measurable resource context and is not always obviously visible to other professionals and agencies. The resourcing, coordination and publication of child and adult practice reviews, the routine development and revision of regional protocols and policies to supplement the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and the re-development of multi-agency training packages are just some examples of safeguarding board work which requires high levels of professional commitment, knowledge and expertise.

9. IDENTIFIED SAFEGUARDING THEMES

Our three-year strategic plan enables our priorities to be targeted incrementally, intending to effect change in a more systematic approach. The plan sets out three Joint Strategic Priorities which each have six priority focus areas that aid the Boards' strategic direction to flex in accordance with local, regional or national emerging themes, within the parameters of the overarching priority. This has enabled Board members to agree that the priorities remain unchanged for the duration of the three-year period. However, we recognise that throughout the course of this three-year period, certain safeguarding themes have been particularly amplified at times. This has helped us to identify our new or continuing strategic priorities which will inform the new plan. As we consider this final year of our three-year strategic plan, we are keen to reflect upon some examples of those priorities or focus areas which have emerged or have become more amplified. We continue to monitor the emergence of local, regional and national safeguarding themes, to ensure that our ongoing focus is appropriate.

In light of the cost-of-living crisis, it is not surprising that **poverty** has been identified as a safeguarding theme over the course of the last year. The cost-of-living crisis and poverty are likely to have a significant and long-lasting impact on families, services and staff. In addition, the nature of poverty will likely impose resultant safeguarding concerns, for example in relation to neglect and mental health and wellbeing for both service users and practitioners. We continue to work with our partners to anticipate, and mitigate with preventative services, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis impact upon families and the associated safeguarding implications.

One of the Boards' long-standing strategic focus areas has been in relation to building resilience. However, over the past year, this has continued to become particularly acute, and our partners continue to face even greater challenges in terms of service delivery, with emerging concerns relating to the links between safeguarding and workforce capacity, competence and confidence. The persistent factors such as **workforce resilience**, combined with the environmental factors such as cost of living and poverty implications present concerning implications for service delivery and service resilience. The pressures faced by service providers are considerable, working with families with increasingly complex needs, often within teams where significant staff vacancies exist. The likely impact will affect the wellbeing and safety of citizens and the workforce. We will continue to monitor and prioritise this work. The last year has continued to highlight the ongoing resilience of Gwent Safeguarding Boards as a result of the commitment of its member agencies. We have relied upon the strength of our well-established partnerships to respond to the challenges faced by our members at times.

Our practice reviews and multi-agency professional forums told us that an emerging theme was **whole family domestic abuse**, in the broader sense, where victims and survivors can range from partners, ex-partners, parents and children. Consequently, this will form a future priority area for the Boards next year. This will ensure a wider spectrum and focus of activity. Another enduring priority focus area is **mental health** of children, young people and adults who may be at risk. Throughout the last year, we have recognised an emerging theme of child / adolescent suicide or self-harm from both our practice review work and our Immediate Response Groups. We

responded by working collaboratively with the Gwent Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Steering Group leads and the ABUHB Public Health leads. This helped us to improve our immediate, multi-agency response to a critical incident involving a child in order to manage the impact upon other children or community members.

Child sexual abuse continues as an ongoing priority safeguarding theme having previously emerged from the work undertaken by some of our regional review panels. The regional work which was undertaken by our Board in response to Welsh Government's three-year action plan for Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), has continued to receive a dedicated and strategic focus in Gwent since the completion of this action plan last year. Our Gwent CSA task group is devoted to the review and improvement of practices and systems in our region which will help us to better identify and respond to child sexual abuse. Recent activity has involved a case audit, awareness-raising campaign and ambitions to promote and embed resources developed by the Centre of Expertise for Child Sexual Abuse, who have also delivered specialist training in our region this year.

This year, **transitional safeguarding** has emerged as a theme from our Immediate Response Groups and practice review work. It has helped to shine a light on the complexities of supporting and safeguarding young people as they move into adulthood. In addition, the Board recognises the importance of ensuring that practitioners feel equipped and competent to identify and respond to any complex needs for young people transitioning into early adulthood.

Over the course of the last year, regional safeguarding concerns have been identified either through Board partner discussions, practice review learning or Immediate Response Groups, which has helped us to undertake targeted activities in response. Some examples of this include awareness-raising and development of guidance in relation to the subject of safeguarding and dogs and scoping the prevalence of safeguarding, education and race, with support from an externally commissioned research team. Another example has been our focus on improving regional practices and awareness of multi-agency working and the roles of partner agencies by committing to the development of safeguarding children's threshold guidance and seeking to agree a regional approach to child protection conference attendance by partners. These emerging issues are not necessarily themes, but they do present opportunities for Board partners to respond efficiently, using a multi-agency, regional and coordinated approach.

Over the past three years, the Boards' work against its strategic priorities, focus areas and statutory responsibilities, as presented in Section 4, along with the emerging safeguarding themes listed within this section, have all informed the identification of **future** strategic priorities, listed below:

One Joint Overarching Vision: To ensure that children and adults, in Gwent, are safeguarded.

Three Joint Strategic Priorities:

- 1. To better protect children and adults from neglect, physical, emotional, sexual and financial harm.**
 - Child Sexual Abuse
 - Neglect
 - Mental Health
 - Whole Family Domestic Abuse
- 2. To better protect children and adults at risk of exploitation.**
 - Exploitation – Criminal, Sexual, Financial
 - Transitional Safeguarding
- 3. To improve and maintain the effectiveness of regional safeguarding arrangements.**
 - Participation / Voice of the Service User
 - Workforce resilience

- Poverty

- Performance outcomes

For more information on the priorities and focus areas contained in the **new Strategic Plan 2023-2026** please follow this link [GWENT SAFEGUARDING Strategic Plan 23-26 Yr 2 REVISED](#)

10. PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVING CITIZENS IN THE WORK OF THE SAFEGUARDING BOARDS

The Covid-19 pandemic presented challenges for safeguarding boards in attempting to reach out to its citizens. Therefore, it is an even greater priority for Gwent Safeguarding Boards to involve citizens, service users, children and young people, parents, carers and survivors, wherever possible to help us to set the strategic direction. We continue to seek opportunities from our partners to ensure that the voice of the citizen continues to inform the work of the Board.

Our Engagement and Communication Subgroup has developed its engagement and communication strategy, annual campaign calendar and enhanced engagement options for group members. This group is also planning a review of its membership to ensure that it has the most appropriate level of expertise and influence into existing forums.

This year, we have started to identify where other Board subgroups, for example Protocols and Procedures and Quality Assurance, may use opportunities to consult and engage with targeted consultation exercises with practitioners or service users. This will assist us in applying practitioner and service user views to the development of resources which we develop and publish, and in shaping the way we most appropriately disseminate these. This will ensure that the public and practitioner voices are heard and can influence and inform a range of Board work.

Through our Engagement and Communication Sub-Group we continue to make links to a number of existing forums and groups. This enables us to utilise these groups for specific pieces of consultation or engagement work, as necessary. We can then ensure that we involve the most relevant group of individuals within each project we undertake. Some examples include:

- Local Safeguarding Network meetings are scheduled to take place during National Safeguarding Week each year. Workshops and presentations, relating to the theme of 'Contemporary Safeguarding' were delivered using a series of virtual multi-agency events this year. These intended to raise awareness in relation to online harms and technology-facilitated abuse and exploitation, amongst others. One of the workshops was delivered in collaboration with a survivor who was able to share her lived experiences, which helped to improve practitioner insight into survivors and victims.
- We continue to involve families as a matter of course in our child, adult and domestic-adult practice review processes. This has ensured that families feel involved and can influence the learning as part of the review process.

- Over the course of this three-year plan, we have utilised citizen forums in order to inform our work. An example of this involves our Local Safeguarding Network practitioner events where we included the Blaenau Gwent young carer's forum.
- In our online forums, we take the opportunity to consult on or evaluate published Board resources or guidance documents and this year we consulted on our Coercive Control guidance. We learned that it was largely well-received by practitioners, but there was more work to be done in order to increase awareness of this guidance, across all agencies.

11. INFORMATION, LEARNING AND TRAINING

Information

Over the past year, Gwent Safeguarding Board has become increasingly more efficient and effective at information-sharing and awareness-raising. Our weekly Information Exchange is now embedded into routine business and is a useful method for disseminating safeguarding news, resources and training offers to our network. We also regularly update Twitter in order to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of short, frequent messages to our Safeguarding Board followers. We have also introduced a programme of campaign work, which is supported by our Engagement and Communication subgroup, and enables the Board to develop and deliver its own campaigns or to support those developed by other partnerships or organisations. In addition, our website has been improved in a number of ways; signposting to other endorsed safeguarding training including Melo Cymru; creating the news page to update visitors on recent developments; and acting as a conduit to consultations such as Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) and the Gwent VAWDASV Strategy.

Learning

Gwent Safeguarding Board places learning at the heart of its business. As one of its statutory requirements, Safeguarding Boards are to review and analyse the training needs of practitioners in the area, and to remain informed so that it can monitor the training activities provided, identify the training required and ensure agencies provide it. In our region, we pride ourselves on being able to provide a comprehensive package of awareness-raising and training for practitioners, service providers and volunteers. This training enhances that which is already provided by individual agencies.

We hosted an event which considered, with support from subject experts, how safeguarding boards can ensure that any learning which is generated, for example as a result of training delivery, practice reviews or audit work, is firmly applied and embedded into practice, resulting in modified or improved behaviour or end outcome. We continue to work to embed the application of this learning in the next period.

A source of significant learning emerges from our child and adult practice reviews. In our region we have undertaken two Domestic-Adult Practice Reviews which also contribute to our learning. Gwent Safeguarding Board is proud that it has been able to consistently resource its own practice reviews using chairs and reviewers from neighbouring Local Authorities or partners within the region. In the past year, there have been:

- two child practice reviews which were **commissioned**;
- one child practice review which was **published**; and,

- three child practice reviews and one adult practice review which are **ongoing** and will conclude in the forthcoming period.

The subjects or contexts of the practice reviews which we have undertaken over the last year have helped to inform the Boards' focus for the new strategic planning period. These contexts have included child suicide, transitional safeguarding and whole family domestic abuse.

Learning themes which have emerged from these practice reviews will enable us to identify specific work areas using the distilled action plan recommendations.

Some examples of these learning themes are:

- Lived experiences of the adult or child not being considered or fully appreciated. For example, the impact of bereavement, grief and suicide upon a family or the presence of sexualised behaviour in young children being a potential indicator of abuse.
- Insufficient professional curiosity or professional challenge between practitioners or agencies.
- The significant impact of Covid-19 on engagement with families.
- Ensuring multi-agency strategy discussions take place at the earliest opportunity.
- Inadequate communication and information-sharing. For example, silo-working, missing historical information and insufficient record-keeping.
- Misconceptions about the role and responsibilities of other agencies. For example, between statutory and non-statutory services, which includes misconception about threshold criteria for access to different services.

Training

Gwent Safeguarding Boards continue to provide an extensive multi agency regional training programme, with an appropriate mixture of both online and face-to-face interactions to enhance the learning experience. This enables free access to a range of safeguarding courses for practitioners and volunteers across the region. They are designed to complement and add value to the training provided by workforce development teams in the region.

The joint Boards' Delivery Group is made up of multi-agency professionals, identified by their agencies for their ability, knowledge and expertise in aspects of safeguarding practice and this Group contributes significantly to the delivery of our regional training programme. Gwent Safeguarding Boards acknowledge the ongoing support of statutory and non-statutory agencies in enabling the continued roll-out of regional multi-agency safeguarding training.

This year, we have commissioned training across a number of specialised safeguarding topics. This has included briefings and training from a number of providers in the variety of subject areas listed below.

As indicated in the table below, this year the number of attendees and sessions being delivered has remained high and is a demonstration of the increasing confidence and capability of Gwent Safeguarding Boards in continuing to function effectively in respect of its training offer.

The following is a summary of the training provided by Gwent Safeguarding Board in 2022/2023:

Delivered By	Title	No of Sessions Delivered	Total No Trained
Delivery Group	Introduction to Safeguarding (Children and Adults)	10	187
Delivery Group	Safeguarding Children: The Safeguarding Process	10	162
In-house Delivery	Child and Adult Practice Review Chair and Reviewer Training	1	20
The CSA Centre	Intra-Familial CSA	1	11
The CSA Centre	Harmful Sexual Behaviours	3	47
The CSA Centre	Sibling Sexual Abuse	2	37
Exemplary Safeguarding C.I.C	Girls and Gangs	1	16
Exemplary Safeguarding C.I.C	Gangs and Criminal Exploitation	1	23
Neil Bovingdon	An Introduction into Handling Issues of Suicide and Self Harm	4	48
New Pathways	Vicarious Trauma and Wellbeing	2	30
Edge Training	Self-neglect, Mental Capacity Act and Hoarding	4	76
Gwent Police	Spot the Signs – Exploited Children and Young People	7	114
Gwent Police	Spot the Signs – Exploited Adults	7	80
Gwent N-gage	Talking to Young People about Substance Misuse	1	6
Gwent N-gage	Social Media and Drugs	1	6
Gwent N-gage	New Psychoactive Substances	2	15
Simon Howarth	Evidence Based Practice when working with Child Neglect	2	42
Charlotte Waite	Professional Curiosity	3	69
Lucy Faithfull Foundation	Digital Resilience	2	34
Spot Loan Sharks Wales	Loan Shark Awareness	2	23
TOTAL		66	1046

Sessions Currently in Development

Delivered By	Title
In-house	Working with Child Neglect
Commissioned	Mental Capacity Act, Domestic Abuse, Coercive Control and Adults at Risk Training

12. OTHER BOARD ACTIVITIES

Adult Protection and Support Orders (APSOs)

The statutory guidance issued under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 sets out arrangements for these civil orders to be used by a local authority to enable an authorised officer to speak in private with a person suspected of being an adult at risk.

The Gwent region has authorised officers in place. In 2022/2023, there were no Adult Support and Protection Orders executed in the Gwent region.

Guidance and Advice received from Welsh Ministers and / or the National Independent Safeguarding Board

We have continued to work closely with our Welsh Government colleagues and welcomed the more frequent interactions with the Safeguarding and Advocacy Team and the other Regional Safeguarding Boards across Wales, in order to maintain this national connection.

Representatives from the Gwent Safeguarding Boards have continued to participate fully in national events. This has included the Project Board for the ongoing review of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and dedicated national task groups. Our region participates fully in the All-Wales Regional Safeguarding Board chair meetings and the All Wales Safeguarding Business Managers network events and meetings. Annual Plans and Reports continue to be produced using a format which was agreed with other Board regions to ensure a consistent All Wales approach.

We continue to value the opportunity of working in conjunction with the members of the National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISB). Throughout 2022/2023, our Boards received regular updates from the designated link member of the NISB who has remained a consistent and committed member of Gwent Safeguarding Board for several years now which has served to strengthen the union.

Section 137 requests for information

Section 137(1) of the Act provides a Safeguarding Board with the power to request specified information from a qualifying person or body, provided that the purpose of the request is to enable or assist the Board to perform its functions under the Act.

During the year 2022/2023 the Gwent Safeguarding Boards did not use their Section 137 powers to access information.