



**Gwent Safeguarding
Board**

Annual Report

2025 – 2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gwent Safeguarding Board published a three-year strategic plan, covering the period between 2023/24 to 2025/26. 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 the final Year Three (2025/2026) of this Strategic Plan and remains an important means by which the Gwent Safeguarding Board is publicly accountable for reviewing their effectiveness.

Our strategic plan was prepared with the significant backdrop of the growing cost-of-living crisis and its considerable challenges for citizens, practitioners, service providers and communities. The impact and associated safeguarding implications are still being fully realised in terms of increased poverty, neglect, mental health and resounding service challenges across all sectors. In the face of this, Gwent Safeguarding Board partners continue to work collaboratively and diligently to ensure that essential safeguarding services provide 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 the Board, its subgroups 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 Board's 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:

1. To better protect children and adults from neglect, physical, emotional, sexual and financial harm.
2. To better protect children and adults at risk of exploitation.
3. To improve and maintain the effectiveness of regional safeguarding arrangements.

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 serves to support the

strategic safeguarding framework of the region. We will also indicate where amplified safeguarding concerns have been identified for greater focus over the forthcoming period, to ensure the wellbeing and safety of citizens.



Gareth Jenkins
Director of Children’s Services – Caerphilly C.B.C
SEWSCB Chair



Jane Rodgers
Director of Social Services – Monmouthshire C.B.C.
GwASB Chair

2. LIST OF GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD MEMBERS

- **Membership**

The membership of each Board is as follows:

SOUTHEAST WALES SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

Chair / Director of Children's Services	Caerphilly C.B.C.
Paediatrician 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 YOS's
Director of Education / representative	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 Police and Crime Commissioner	Office of Gwent Police & Crime Commissioner
Safeguarding Professional	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
Head of Resources & Planning, 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 / Chief Officer, 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.
Director of Adult Services	Caerphilly C.B.C.
Chief Executive Officer	GAVO
Head of Operations	GDAS
Head of PPU	Gwent Police
Safeguarding Lead	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
Safeguarding Professional	National Safeguarding Service, Public Health Wales
Business Manager	Regional Safeguarding Business Unit
Safeguarding Officer	South Wales Fire and Rescue 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

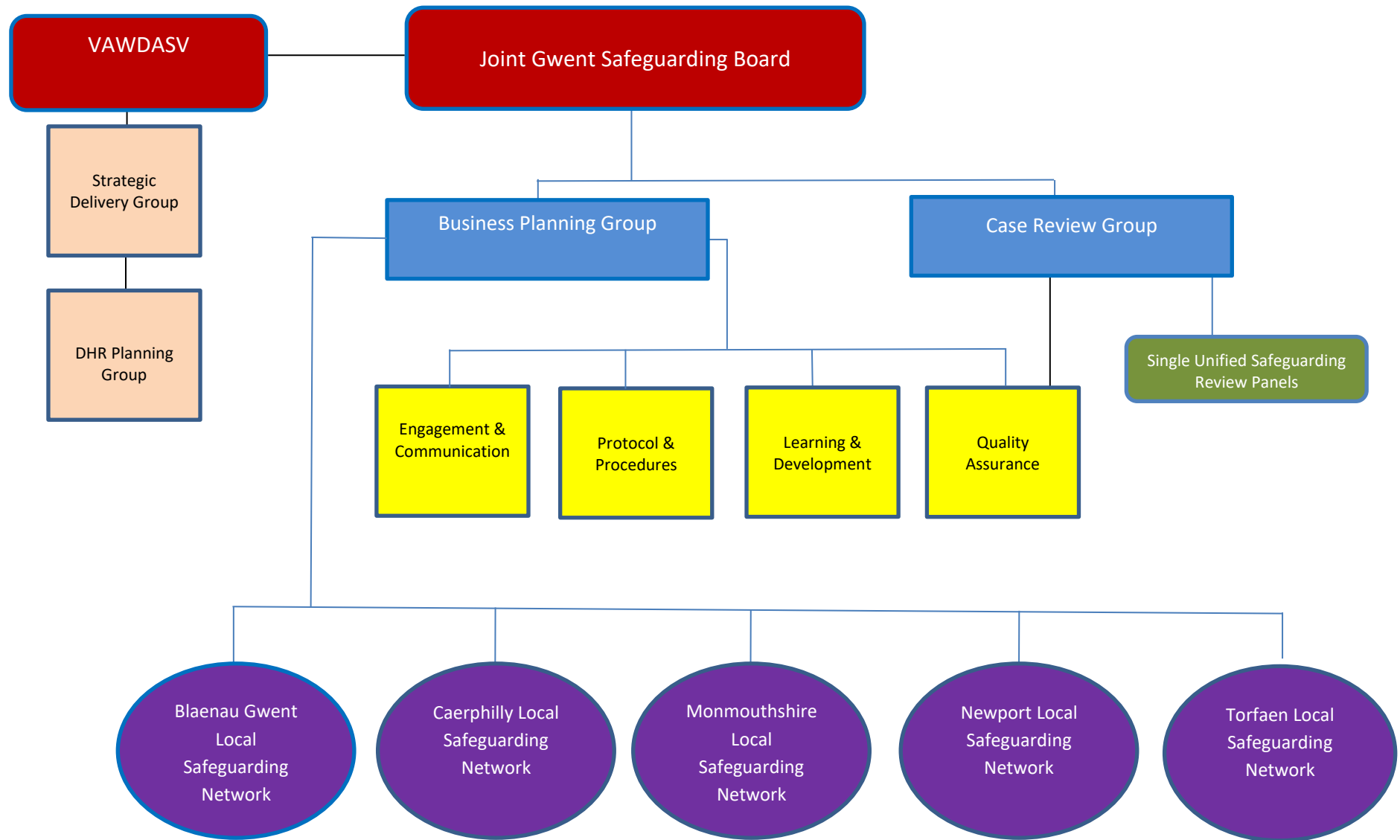
As we review our progress within the final year of our three-year strategic plan, this report will consider the Board's joint strategic priorities and accompanying focus areas, which are listed below in Section 4. We will also consider any achievements and gaps against the Board's priority focus areas, 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 taken place against each strategic priority focus area and what has been achieved or is intended to carry over into the next period. By way of an introduction to the Board diagram below and to Section 4 itself, this section outlines how the Board maximises its structure to execute its statutory duties and achieve its strategic priorities.

With reference to the diagram below, the 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 Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs). 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 Board. 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 Board. This ensures that the Board's 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 Board's subgroups on who will achieve what, against each of the strategic priority focus areas. There will often be multiple activities 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 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 Board.

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

- **Gwent Safeguarding Board's 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 Board during the course of its three-year plan. Beneath these three joint strategic priorities sit a total of ten priority focus areas against which action is taken to achieve the objectives and outcomes. The priorities and focus areas for the three-year period between 2023 and 2026 are listed below, along with the achievements or identified areas for continued work.

For more information on the Board's current priorities and focus areas, please follow this link to our Strategic Plan [GWENT SAFEGUARDING Strategic Plan 26-29 FINAL ENG](#)

- **Joint Strategic Priority 1 – To better protect children and adults from neglect, physical, emotional, sexual and financial harm.**

Safeguarding Focus Area 1.1 - Child Sexual Abuse

The Board has continued a programme to improve responses to child sexual abuse (CSA), overseen by a strategic task group and supported by awareness-raising, training, and audit work. Quarterly data shows CSA remains one of the lowest registration categories, reflecting a wider pattern across Wales despite high prevalence and likely under-reporting.

In response, the Board has prioritised this work, implementing recommendations from a regional multi-agency audit, including new CSA guidance. Gwent has also introduced dual-category registration to ensure sexual abuse concerns are not masked by single category registration arrangements. The 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' North Wales Child Practice Review, where child sexual abuse was a theme, has 27 recommendations for learning. Gwent Safeguarding Board continues to respond in a coordinated and strategic way to the learning emerging from this review to ensure that recommendations and improvements are implemented in this region.

Regional practitioner events have been delivered to share expertise and learning, alongside specialist CSA and harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) training to strengthen multi-agency skills. The region will also evaluate the CSA Signs and Indicators template and plans to collaborate on a national CSA roadshow next September.

Safeguarding Focus Area 1.2 – Neglect

The Board uses a data dashboard to monitor neglect referrals and registrations across Local Authorities, helping identify its prevalence and persistence in Gwent. Previous work focused on a regional neglect toolkit and training to support practitioners in recognising and responding to neglect.

This year, new multi-agency guidance was developed on falls, highlighting that preventable injuries in older people may indicate neglect and require safeguarding consideration.

Training has been expanded through a blended Complex Neglect course and specialist sessions on self-neglect, the Mental Capacity Act, and hoarding. Data shows neglect remains one of the most common forms of abuse for both children and adults, and with ongoing cost-of-living pressures, it will continue to be a key safeguarding priority for the region.

Safeguarding Focus Area 1.3 - Mental Health

Learning from Immediate Response Groups (IRGs) and child practice reviews over the past three years highlighted concerns around child and adolescent suicide and self-harm. An IRG which was held following the tragic death of a young adult care leaver due to its significant community impact prompted us to review the IRG age limit to adopt a more transitional safeguarding approach.

As outlined in Section 12, we have commissioned a programme of training on the Mental Capacity Act across key areas, including self-neglect, hoarding, children and young people, and domestic abuse. This training supports practitioners working with individuals experiencing mental health issues and contributes to improving multi-agency.

Safeguarding Focus Area 1.4 – Whole family domestic abuse

Gwent Safeguarding Board has continued to work closely with the VAWDASV Board, maintaining a strong regional partnership and sharing opportunities to reach wider audiences, supported by joint work such as LSN and protocol development. Collaboration has included implementing Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSR), informed by learning from Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) pilots over the past three years, and ongoing exploration of emerging themes with Welsh Government.

A pilot has also been launched to strengthen collaboration between Learning and Development subgroups, streamlining priorities and identifying opportunities for closer working. Joint activity has extended to World Elder Abuse Day and National Safeguarding Week, sharing learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews.

As outlined in Section 12, bespoke training on the Mental Capacity Act, domestic abuse and coercive control has been developed and delivered, improving practitioner awareness of links between safeguarding, domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse, and supporting more effective multi-agency practice.

Joint Strategic Priority 2: To better protect children and adults at risk of exploitation

Focus Area 2.1 – Exploitation

Gwent partners use the Child Exploitation Measurement Toolkit as a practitioner aide when working with exploitation, supported by strong multi-agency safeguarding hubs that enable early consultation, effective information-sharing and timely decision-making. All five Local Authorities continue to take part in the Home Office National Referral Mechanism pilot, promoting local decision-making for child victims of modern slavery.

Specialist training on child and adult exploitation was commissioned (Section 12) this year, along with important insights from those with lived experiences to raise awareness of how services have operated to safeguard against exploitation. Regional MACE meetings provide oversight, intelligence-sharing and reporting on trends and these are reported to the Board on a quarterly basis to enable assurance and further action where required. As a recommendation from an audit, the publication of our Financial Abuse Toolkit has enabled us to develop this practitioner aide to assist those working with this type of abuse.

Safeguarding Focus Area 2.2 – Transitional Safeguarding

Transitional safeguarding emphasises continued support for young people approaching 18, particularly those at risk of exploitation who may be underserved by traditional child/adult service boundaries.

This year, the Board has supported innovative work in one Gwent Local Authority to pilot a transitional safeguarding model with partners, extending MACE age thresholds to 25 and reviewing service pathways from a user perspective to inform a future adolescent service model. The Board is helping to share this learning regionally.

Learning from Immediate Response Groups (IRGs) has also highlighted ongoing challenges in transitional safeguarding, following the tragic death of a young adult care leaver. This has prompted a review of IRG age limits to better incorporate a transitional safeguarding approach.

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

Safeguarding Focus Area 3.1 – Participation / Voice of the service user

The Engagement and Communication Subgroup has worked to strengthen citizen involvement, ensuring service user voices shape safeguarding practice in Gwent. This included input from NYAS on the voice of the child and lived experience, support in developing leaflets for children who are looked after, and creation of multi-agency guidance to promote understanding of lived experiences.

Safeguarding training continues to emphasise person-centred practice and advocacy. An extended pilot with a third sector partner gathered feedback from families involved in child protection. This highlighted the importance of meaningful parental involvement in care and support planning, consistent and compassionate communication, trauma-informed practice and recognition of strengths and emotional / mental health support alongside safeguarding interventions.

Safeguarding Focus Area 3.2 – Workforce resilience: capacity, competence and confidence

The introduction of the National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework prompted a review of our regional training provision to ensure alignment. This has included promoting adoption of the national Group A e-learning resources across partner agencies and adapting Board training content accordingly.

We have supported partners to ensure staff complete required training and rolled out Group C safeguarding training through both in-house delivery and commissioned provision across all five Local Authorities. We also developed Multi-Agency Practice Guidance for Safer Recruitment and Employment, with input from DBS colleagues, to strengthen recruitment practices.

Assurance remains a priority for the RSB. Through our self-assessment work this year, partners were asked to provide assurance on supervision and staff wellbeing, with common strengths and improvement themes collated from the responses and shared as part of the Board's Development Day workshop. The Quality Assurance subgroup has started gathering regional data to better understand the management of safeguarding allegations (Section 5, Wales Safeguarding Procedures) across the region. Alongside forthcoming Section 5 revisions and recommendations from the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' North Wales Child Practice Review, a task group will be set up to review and strengthen a consistent, proportionate approach across Gwent.

Safeguarding Focus Area 3.3 – Poverty

At the beginning of our three-year plan, we delivered poverty-themed National Safeguarding Week events, raising awareness of the cost of living, gambling-related harm, and wider health and wellbeing issues. We also commissioned specialist Child Poverty Awareness training through Children in Wales.

Working with our APB and VAWDASV Board, we explored how all three Boards support the same individuals with multiple and co-occurring needs, including poverty, mental health, housing, substance use and VAWDASV. We implemented recommendations from our regional Financial Abuse audit, reviewing 30 cases across five Local Authorities. Most were positive, with the victim's voice well represented. A key theme highlighted the complexity of cases involving family members, where victims may be reluctant to seek help. Partners, including DWP and Age Cymru, report rising financial abuse, potentially linked to economic pressures. In response, we developed a Financial Abuse Toolkit to support practitioners, alongside awareness-raising by Gwent Police on cyber-crime and financial scams through Local Safeguarding Networks.

Research, including from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, identifies poverty as a major driver of homelessness. Locally, early findings from a Multi-Agency Professional Forum reviewing deaths within the homeless community indicate similar links.

Safeguarding Focus Area 3.4 – Performance Outcomes

The Board uses a range of routine and responsive assurance processes to monitor safeguarding effectiveness, including data returns, audits, PRUDiCS, SUSRs and multi-agency forums. Quarterly data from all five Local Authorities is scrutinised to identify trends and inform action, alongside contributions to the development of the National Multi-agency Safeguarding Performance Framework.

A multi-agency self-assessment highlighted partner strengths in governance, leadership, partnership working, aligned policies and training, with growing focus on trauma-informed and digital safeguarding. Areas for improvement include consistency in sharing learning, data quality assurance, training compliance, policy communication, digital/AI guidance, and strengthening the voice of vulnerable groups, particularly children.

While these arrangements provide assurance, further work will continue in respect of assurance, in order to strengthen a consistent regional multi-agency performance and quality framework.

5. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SAFEGUARDING BOARD IN THE PAST YEAR

These are some examples of Gwent Safeguarding Board's achievements for 2025/2026 which highlight our 'good news' stories and continue to demonstrate the breadth of its work over the past year:

1. Gwent Safeguarding Board's Development Day provided an opportunity to reflect on our **success stories**. Some examples of emerging themes listed below will be used to inform future work:

- The family context is critical
- Tailoring works better than standardisation
- Collaboration prevents gaps

2. Our **Quality Assurance subgroup** strengthened a robust, data-driven safeguarding framework, delivering multi-quarter and annual analyses and introduced per-100,000 population reporting to enable clearer comparisons across Local Authorities.

4. During 2025/2026, we took a **coordinated approach to responding to the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice'** North Wales Child Practice Review recommendations by:

- establishing a strategic task group
- developing a regional action plan
- integrating into our self-assessment tool
- integrating into our Development Day
- informing our new 3-year strategic plan
- prompting a Board membership review
- establishing a dedicated task group for Section 5 allegation management

3. Gwent Safeguarding Board has continued to implement **Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs)** across the region. We have worked closely with Welsh Government to support the post-1-year implementation review to continue to improve this process as less onerous for families and producing more timely learning for practitioners and organisations.

5. As part of **National Safeguarding Week**, we collaborated with people with lived experience, academic experts, and with other partners to deliver virtual multi-agency events, under the theme of 'Joining the Dots.'

This raised awareness of transitional safeguarding, exploitation, cuckooing, adultification and real-life insights. We reached almost 400 practitioners, with positive feedback on the opportunities for learning and practice reflections.

6. We continue to deliver core business for the Board. 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 strong regional input into the development and **implementation of the new National Safeguarding Training, Learning and Development Standards and Framework**. This year, we commissioned the delivery of Group C safeguarding training for all eligible social services staff, using our own high-quality, multi-agency safeguarding training package.

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 practitioners and service providers. We take pride in listening to our Local Safeguarding Network partners, supporting a reflective and resilient workforce to ensure that the subject areas are most pertinent to the local area.

9. Our **Immediate Response Groups (IRGs)** convene when there has been a critical incident involving a child or young person and a multi-agency response is required to manage a community impact. This year, we supported 5 IRGs across 4 Local Authority areas and we revised the age limit for IRGs to apply more of a transitional safeguarding approach for anyone aged up to 25 years.

8. We have maintained a viable delivery group for offering 'in-house' training this year and we continue to commission specialist training. We have provided **over 100 training sessions** across **many safeguarding subject areas**, for **almost 2,000 practitioners**. This has safeguarding topics, such as exploitation, neglect, mental capacity, child sexual abuse, domestic abuse. (See Section 12)

10. We launched a **public survey to better understand people's experiences of safeguarding**. We asked the public to identify any perceived barriers to reporting safeguarding concerns. Building on these insights, our Engagement and Communication subgroup is reviewing the accessibility of safeguarding information including how to report concerns.

6. NATIONAL MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK – 5 DOMAIN QUESTIONS

Over the duration of this three-year strategic plan, Gwent Safeguarding Board has collaborated closely with the National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISB) and partner organisations to develop a national, multi-agency safeguarding performance framework. This framework aims to present a coherent and comprehensive picture of safeguarding effectiveness across Wales. During the national pilot phase, which involved regional workshops with researchers from Manchester Metropolitan University and Local Authority performance leads, partners consistently emphasised the importance of drawing on existing, meaningful metrics wherever possible to minimise additional resource demands. We welcome the opportunity to continue refining and retesting this comprehensive, multi-agency safeguarding performance framework to ensure it reflects a balanced and inclusive contribution from all safeguarding board partners. However, Gwent Safeguarding Board recognises the forthcoming challenges for many social care partners as the existing data recording system is closed down and users are migrated over to a new technology within stringent timescales.

Within the framework, there are 5 domains which contain a number of questions for regional safeguarding boards. Some of these questions have been addressed throughout the main body of this report. However, for ease of reference Gwent Safeguarding Board has set out below, how existing processes, activities or work areas can attempt to answer these questions:



1. Safeguarding Process

- How is the board assured that arrangements are effective in **identifying** and **responding** to safeguarding concerns?.
- What are the **outcomes** of regional safeguarding processes and interventions?

Gwent Safeguarding Board and its subgroups consider safeguarding information from a range of sources on a routine basis to provide assurance on safeguarding arrangements in the region. Our Quality Assurance subgroup receives quarterly reports from Local Authority partners on safeguarding processes and responses, across Gwent. Trends, anomalies and context are then scrutinised before being shared with the Board. Some examples are listed below:

- The Board considers data reflecting the journey through the child protection process on a quarterly basis. This includes the proportion of Strategy Meetings progressing to Section 47 enquiries across the 5 Local Authorities and conversion rates from Section 47 enquiries to Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC). Rates shift from quarter to quarter in a way that aligns with the complexity of cases being assessed. This demonstrates that teams are considering the most suitable routes for safeguarding children, whether through ICPC or through alternative support options. The regional view supports ongoing reflection on consistency but also highlights how responses are tailored to the unique circumstances of children and families. Where slight differences between quarters were noted, the contextual discussions enabled the Board to understand the reasons for this, for example, this may be attributed to safeguarding activity being implemented during enquiries, reducing the need for conference.
- Across the year, child protection registrations indicated that neglect remains the dominant category throughout, followed by emotional abuse as the second most prevalent concern. Other

categories such as physical and sexual abuse appear at much lower levels, with only occasional spikes, linked to specific sibling groups. While overall demand appears to be rising, patterns vary between areas, with some showing steady levels and others more volatility. This trend suggests some increasing system pressure and highlights the ongoing need for early intervention and targeted support, particularly in response to neglect and emotional harm.

- Adult Services data trends suggested a marked increase in case complexity, duration and legal involvement, particularly in relation to self-neglect and Court of Protection cases. Health partners reinforced that current data systems capture volume but not intensity, time or complexity, limiting understanding of pressure and success.
- All local authorities continue to experience significant contact and referral activity for children, illustrating strong public and professional vigilance across the region. Variations in Duty to Report (DTR) volumes and No Further Action (NFA) rates reflect differences in local demographics, pathways into early help, and levels of partner engagement. These patterns show that safeguarding front-doors are actively managing a wide range of information, with NFA outcomes representing important triage work that ensures children and families are directed toward the right support at the right time. The collective regional picture helps identify opportunities for shared learning around referral quality and early intervention routes.
- This year, our Quality Assurance Subgroup has started to collect data relating to Section 5 (safeguarding allegations). This has allowed the Board to begin to understand the patterns of recording, progression and outcomes in relation to Section 5 processes across the five local authorities. As a result of contextual discussions with partners, we intend to establish a dedicated task group to map what currently happens, to review variations or inconsistencies in practice and process and to attempt to agree a clear, proportionate and consistent regional approach to Section 5 arrangements, in Gwent.

These examples demonstrate how the Board monitors safeguarding data and its patterns, makes comparisons over time, provides some reflection on safeguarding processes in the region and enables a multi-agency response to gaps or emerging themes.

2. Multi-agency Activity and Data

- How does the board assure itself that existing **protocols between agencies work effectively**, when individuals are identified as at risk from harm?
- What **data** is collected around this, how is it shared and what evidence has emerged in the period?

One example of multi-agency activity and data which is routinely shared with the Board is the regional Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) quarterly updates. The MACE reports enable the Board to identify or track trends in the numbers of children being supported as well as any important context, emerging themes and improvement plans. This enables the Board to monitor the numbers of children who are at high risk of child sexual or criminal exploitation and are being supported as part of this cohort. Any changes in trends are supported by context which is provided by the police leads along with a full description of what action is being taken by each partner to respond to this. Trends,

anomalies and context are then scrutinised before being shared with the Board. Some examples are listed below:

- High demand and complexity in exploitation continue, including emerging risks from AI-generated imagery in grooming and concerning cohorts in some areas. Reports highlight ongoing police operations linked to drug exploitation and impacts of out-of-county placements on missing episodes. Good practice includes multi-agency Missing Children meetings and debriefs, with plans to increase police involvement in risk management meetings to support care settings.
- The MACE reports continue to highlight a lack of consistency in applying a transitional safeguarding approach particularly where exploitation risks persist into late adolescence. As they turn 18 years of age, they leave the cohort and are not likely to meet the threshold for adult safeguarding services. The work being undertaken in one Local Authority will test a transitional safeguarding approach in the coming period, which the Gwent region intends to learn from and support.

These examples demonstrate how the Board assures itself that existing multi-agency safeguarding arrangements work effectively or need improvement. In addition, this year we conducted multi-agency self-assessment work, using the **Safeguarding Maturity Matrix**, to ask partners to review and rate their own safeguarding arrangements. This highlighted strengths in governance, safeguarding leadership, regional engagement, accessible training aligned to national standards, and effective multi-agency working. Partners also identified improvements needed in data monitoring, training compliance and role mapping, consistent policy communication, digital and A.I. guidance, and ensuring vulnerable groups, especially children, have a stronger voice in safeguarding.

The additional examples below demonstrate how the Board responds to concerns that existing protocols between agencies are not working as effectively as they could:

- An Immediate Response Group (IRG) which was held following the tragic death of a young adult care leaver due to its significant community impact prompted us to review the IRG age limit to adopt a more transitional safeguarding approach. We now have a **revised Immediate Response Group protocol** for anyone up to the age of 25 years.
- Learning which emerged from our IRG meetings highlighted the need to develop and publish practitioner guidance in respect of **Safeguarding Children and Adults around Dogs**.
- Following a multi-agency audit on child sexual abuse (CSA), **regional CSA guidance** was developed with input from key partners. It reflects audit learning, supports professional curiosity and judgement, and signposts CSA Centre resources, in conjunction with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP).

3. Thematic Hotspots

- What **key thematic sources of harm** which require a safeguarding response locally are evidenced in Board data?
- What **steps** have been identified to response to this thematic evidence?

Throughout the Board and subgroup work areas we identify thematic hotspots. Examples of some of the mechanisms we use to identify themes are practice reviews, complaint processes, audits, Immediate Response Groups (IRGs), self-assessment responses and performance data, as well as listening and responding to what is shared with our region on a national basis. In addition, this can be in the form of anecdotal discussions between partners within subgroups which prompts us to explore whether this is a theme and shared by others, via regional audit or escalation into the Board. Some examples are listed below:

- **Practice reviews** – One theme which has started to emerge from some of our practice review is the adultification of children within assessments and professional language. This has prompted us to raise awareness across Gwent about this subject, commissioning subject experts to share learning and research at our Local Safeguarding Network events and to provide relevant training offers.
- **Immediate Response Groups** - Our IRGs convene when there has been a critical incident involving a child and a multi-agency response is required to manage an impact upon a community. This year, we revised the age limit for IRGs to apply more of a transitional safeguarding approach, so that those affected will benefit from an enhanced process at this traumatic time. This was a response to an IRG held in response to the tragic death of a young adult care leaver due to the significant community impact caused by the death. Section 4 and 10 outline further work in respect of the transitional safeguarding theme.
- **National themes** - Gwent Safeguarding Board's links with national bodies enable it to respond to national priorities. This year, it acted on the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* North Wales Child Practice Review by creating a strategic task group and a multi-agency tracker to monitor progress against the recommendations. A revised self-assessment tool aligned with these recommendations, allowing partners to report compliance. The Board has also established a task group on Section 5 (safeguarding allegations) of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures to review variations in practice and to agree a consistent regional approach across Gwent.
- **Safeguarding Maturity Matrix (self-assessment)** – Self-assessment responses show a mature safeguarding system across Gwent, with strong compliance, integration, and evidence of good practice. Improvement priorities include greater consistency (training, policies, recording), workforce readiness (supervision, role mapping, digital skills), and preparation for national changes (Section 5, WSP). The process also helps the Board identify themes and track progress.

4. Service User Feedback

- What are the RSB's **objectives regarding collecting service user feedback** in relation to direct safeguarding activity?
- What do the **metrics** that capture this feedback tell the Board?
- How does the Board plan to respond to this evidence and over what timescale?

The Voice of the Service User is one of the strategic priority focus areas for Gwent Safeguarding Board. Below, we outline some examples of where, this year, we have collected service user feedback on the subject of safeguarding, or we have championed the voice of the service user:

- In carrying out our **Safeguarding Maturity Matrix self-assessment**, partners set out that mechanisms exist for hearing the voice of victims and children, but there is a need to improve systematic service-user feedback mechanisms and to strengthen consistent recording of children's voices. This provides partners with the opportunity to highlight their improvement plans to the Board.
- We completed an **extended pilot examining service users' experiences of safeguarding**. Findings highlighted the value of trusted relationships, clear and open communication, and the involvement of parents. Overall, the process is most effective when practitioners are supportive and non-judgmental, and when parents feel actively included and engaged.
- As part of the Board's annual Development Day, we asked partners to submit and **review case examples of where positive outcomes had been achieved**. One of the key themes to emerge from this was the 'voice of the individual' matters; successful outcomes were promoted when children and adults were given space to express what they wanted, whether through advocacy, guardians, or informal conversations; and having a say helped them feel invested and motivated.
- The Board's multi-agency safeguarding courses all promote and emphasise **person-centred practice, engagement and voice of the service user** throughout the safeguarding process and are aligned with the new National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework in relation to this subject.
- Over the past year, we have promoted this focus through our Local Safeguarding Network Practitioner Forums, using **real lived experiences** to enhance awareness and learning. In addition, the development of our honour-based abuse (HBA) guidance has been informed directly by a service user with relevant lived experience.

We prioritise understanding individuals' "lived experiences," including behaviours and circumstances, rather than depending solely on what is verbally expressed. This approach has been reinforced in learning emerging from our regional practice reviews and from the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' North Wales Child Practice Review.

5. Workforce Information

- What is known about **the profile** of the safeguarding workforce?
- How is **recruitment and retention** affecting delivery of safeguarding duties?
- To what extent is **multi-agency training** provided to and taken up by the safeguarding workforce (as profiled)?
- What evidence is available to assure the Board that agencies understand and respond to the **well-being and support** of the safeguarding workforce?

Workforce resilience remains a key priority focus area for Gwent Safeguarding Board, specifically in relation to capacity, competence and confidence. Although partners do not currently report workforce profile information to the Board, we are aware from our Board and subgroup discussions that recruitment and retention continue to affect all partners. As part of the routine reporting arrangements, the Board's subgroups are required to identify any safeguarding issues or lessons learned as part of their update to our more senior Business Planning Group. For example:

- **Safeguarding Maturity Matrix (self-assessment)** - This year, Board partners completed a multi-agency self-assessment of their safeguarding arrangements, including workforce competence. Strengths included robust safer recruitment, established procedures for concerns about practitioners, training aligned to national standards, accessible safeguarding information, and well-established wellbeing and whistleblowing processes. Areas for improvement include the reliability of training compliance data, expanding digital recording in schools, improving access to trauma-informed training, and formalising safeguarding supervision where it is inconsistent.
- **Performance data** - We note that considerable discussion takes place in our Quality Assurance Group around workforce information, and how this may impact upon safeguarding arrangements for our partners. This ensures that the Board is aware of the workforce challenges which may be affecting safeguarding duties. In our Quality Assurance subgroup, when discussions take place about the differences between the quarterly numbers of DTRs progressing to Section 47 investigations and on to Child Protection Conferences, it is helpful to understand the context in terms of workforce changes. Differences can be attributed to targeted training events or indeed to staffing profiles, such as a reduced or newly qualified workforce, affecting capacity or confidence levels.
- **Safeguarding allegations about practitioners** – Last year, safeguarding leads reported increased referrals involving allegations against practitioners (Section 5, WSP). In response, the Quality Assurance subgroup began collating regional data to better understand workforce implications. With updated Section 5 (WSP) pending, learning from the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* North Wales Child Practice Review, and a recommendation for annual joint inspectorate engagement, a task group will be established to review and strengthen a consistent, proportionate approach across Gwent.
- **National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework** - Gwent Safeguarding Board is proud to offer multi-agency safeguarding training to its partners (details contained in Section 12). As well as ensuring that our Board's complementary training offer corresponds to the National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework, we have supported our Local Authority partners to ensure that their workforce undertakes the necessary training as required within the framework, by commissioning external trainers to deliver our Group C training package.

7. 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;
- Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST)
- 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;
- The other five regional safeguarding children and adult boards, in Wales.

Gwent Safeguarding Board and its subgroups receive online presentations and briefings from a wide range of partners, reflecting our commitment to collaboration and staying informed on regional safeguarding priorities. These include:

- **Thematic Review of Adult Practice Reviews, Wales 2025** – Professor Michelle McManus, Manchester Metropolitan University
- **The Local Safeguarding Picture Through Data Lens** – Beth Thomas, Quality Assurance Subgroup chair
- **Transitional Safeguarding: An Update on Research Roadshow & Next Steps** – Finn Madell, Head of Corporate Safeguarding, Newport City Council
- **Safeguarding, Education & Race: Local Authority Responses to Recommendations** – Sarah Morgan, Chief Officer of Education, Newport City Council
- **Strengthening Safeguarding Governance Review** – Zarah Newman, Safeguarding Adviser and Policy Manager Welsh Government, and Jan Pickles, Independent Review Lead
- **National VAWDASV Survey** – Johanna Robinson, National Advisor VAWDASV

8. BOARD MEMBER AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS

Our Gwent Safeguarding Board partners continue to demonstrate their commitment and dedication to the work of the Board 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 strong relationships with other strategic partnerships, the Board ensures that safeguarding remains a priority consideration when working through significant challenges for service providers within our region.

We continue to use resources from all constituent Board agencies and many other partners to support the work of the Board 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 throughout 2025/2026 was sourced from:

SEWSCB Caerphilly Children's Services	GwASB Monmouthshire Social Services Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
CASE REVIEW GROUP Gwent Police Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service	BUSINESS PLANNING GROUP Caerphilly Safeguarding Team Newport Safeguarding Team
PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES Monmouthshire County Council Torfaen Children's Services	JOINT QUALITY ASSURANCE GROUP Blaenau Gwent Safeguarding Team Caerphilly Adults Services Caerphilly Children's Services
ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION Monmouthshire Children's Services	LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT Newport City 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 Board's generic training programme. We continue to 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 invest 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 to commission bespoke training where priority needs are identified. All partner agencies of the Board have committed to this resource, which we count as a major contribution to the Board's business. Over the past three years, partners have

invested considerable energy to ensure that the Board's training offer complies fully with the National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework.

We continue to rely on the resources provided by agencies and partners to chair and provide reviewers for Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews. 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 and Children's and Adult Services in the review processes.

We continue to depend heavily on the help and support of the Safeguarding Service Managers from the five Local Authority areas across Gwent as they each Chair their own Local Safeguarding Network (LSN) meetings and facilitate their six monthly LSN Practitioner Forum events. The LSN events continue to be integral to National Safeguarding Week, in Gwent. They present opportunities for the Board to showcase learning, raise awareness, and seek practitioner views on Board resources using practitioner surveys.

Across Gwent, the way that the Board and its subgroups operate 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 Board at its current level would not be possible.

9. USE OF RESOURCES

The Board is 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.

The funding from Board partner agencies resources a regional infrastructure of staff working closely with the Board Chairs, Safeguarding Board partners and other bodies represented on the Board, whose purpose is set out within the above guidance, to:

- drive forward day-to-day business in relation to the Board's core functions;
- provide administrative and organisational support for the work of a Board's subgroups;
- provide administrative and organisational support for activities associated with quality assurance, training and staff development and the learning and reviewing arrangements, including Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews;
- provide support for the review of the Board's performance and for its medium-term financial planning.

The host organisation for the Business Unit is also the Lead Partner.

The Board also provides an extensive multi agency regional training programme. This consists of a range 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 2025/2026 are set out below:

Total costs	£492,273
Staff costs	£ 408,663
Day to day running costs	£ 25,751
Provision of Multi-Agency Training and Practice Reviews	£ 46,681
Engagement / Websites & Publicity / Professional events (Including National Safeguarding Week)	£ 11,178

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 Board and its work. This is often in addition to their identified professional roles and day to day responsibilities. The variable and diverse nature of the Board's work makes this difficult to report on within a quantifiable and measurable resource context and it is not always obviously visible to other professionals and agencies. The resourcing, coordination and publication of Single Unified Safeguarding 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.

10. IDENTIFIED SAFEGUARDING THEMES

Gwent Safeguarding Board's three-year strategic plan 2023-2026 takes a structured, incremental approach, setting three Joint Strategic Priorities supported by ten focus areas. This allows flexibility to respond to emerging local, regional, and national safeguarding themes while maintaining consistent priorities over the full period. As we enter the final year, we continue to reflect on key themes that have emerged and ensure our focus remains relevant.

Transitional safeguarding remains a significant regional theme, recognising that risks do not end at age 18. The Board is working towards a more flexible, cross-service approach to better support young people into adulthood. This year, we have continued to endorse the innovation which is taking place in one of our Local Authority areas to test a new approach to support young people for a longer time as they become young adults, to divert them away from exploitation and reduce the opportunities for them to become exploiters. This informed our Board Development Day, enabling us to learn and share lessons across our region. This year, we created a video to raise awareness of transitional safeguarding, and we revised the age limit for Immediate Response Groups (IRGs) to apply a more transitional safeguarding approach for anyone aged up to 25 years.

The voice of the service user continues to be essential, particularly in complex cases where communication may be limited. We recognise the importance of understanding "lived experiences" — including behaviours and circumstances — rather than relying solely on verbal expression. The importance of this has been highlighted within our regional practice reviews, from the National Independent Safeguarding Board's (NISB) Thematic Analysis of Child Practice Review in Wales 2023 and from the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' North Wales Child Practice Review (CPR). Service user insights are an integral feature of NISB's Five Safeguarding Domains as a model for national performance reporting. This year, we raised awareness using the lived experiences of service users as part of our Local Safeguarding Network Practitioner Forums. We have also ensured that a service user with lived experience of honour-based abuse (HBA) informed the development of our HBA guidance. This year, we completed an extended pilot exploring service users' experiences of safeguarding. It highlighted the importance of trusted relationships, clear communication, and involving parents, showing the process works best when practitioners are supportive, non-judgemental, and parents feel engaged.

A core priority focus area has been **workforce resilience**. The Board recognises the importance of maintaining staff capacity, competence, and confidence to manage the demands of safeguarding. Organisations must foster supportive, collaborative cultures to prevent burnout and deliver consistent, trauma-informed care. Learning themes from the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' North Wales Child Practice Review highlights the importance of maintaining a well-trained workforce with the confidence to identify the signs of abuse and to respond effectively. This year, we strengthened practitioner capability by continuing to update our multi-agency training to meet the National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework. We commissioned the delivery of Group C safeguarding training for all eligible social services staff, using our own high-quality, multi-agency safeguarding training package, in order to bolster competence and confidence.

Over the course of the last year, regional safeguarding concerns continue to be identified through a range of platforms including Board partner discussions, stakeholder interactions, practice review learning or Immediate Response Groups, which helps us to respond using targeted activities. The Board's work against its strategic priorities, focus areas and statutory responsibilities, as presented in Section 4, along with the amplified safeguarding themes listed within this section, have all helped to direct our focus for the coming period in respect of our new 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.**
 - Sexual abuse and sexual violence
 - Neglect
 - Complex and co-occurring and complex needs
- 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.**
 - Lived experiences
 - Workforce resilience
 - Assurance

For more information on the priorities and focus areas contained in the Strategic Plan 2026-2029 please follow this link [GWENT SAFEGUARDING Strategic Plan 26-29 FINAL ENG](#)

11. PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVING CITIZENS IN THE WORK OF THE SAFEGUARDING BOARD

Gwent Safeguarding Board places a strong emphasis on engaging citizens, service users, children and young people, parents, carers, and survivors wherever possible to help shape its strategic direction. We actively continue to work with our partners to create opportunities that ensure the voices of citizens consistently inform the Board's work.

The Engagement and Communication Subgroup regularly reviews its membership to ensure it has the right expertise and influence within existing forums. Additionally, we identify opportunities for other Board subgroups—such as Protocols and Procedures and Quality Assurance—to carry out targeted consultation and engagement activities with practitioners and service users. Some examples of our work this year to involve and engage stakeholders are included below:

- As outlined earlier in the report, our Quality Assurance subgroup oversaw a pilot to better understand from service users their lived experience of the safeguarding process. We learned about the importance of the child and family relationship with a trusted practitioner and about the need for better communication, support, and involvement of parents in the child protection process. Overall, the process is most effective when practitioners are supportive and non-judgmental, and when parents feel actively included and engaged.
- We completed public engagement events in all of our Local Authorities this year. This enabled us to carry out 'Safeguarding and Me' surveys with members of the public, to understand their awareness and experiences of services. This has helped us to better understand where to target our awareness-raising focus in the coming period.
- Local Safeguarding Network practitioner events take place twice each year. They are opportunities for the Board to consult with practitioners and to raise awareness about key safeguarding themes. This year, we collaborated with people with lived experience, amongst other partners, to raise awareness about transitional safeguarding, exploitation, using real-life insights. We reached almost 400 practitioners, with positive feedback on the opportunities for learning and practice reflections.
- The development of our honour-based abuse (HBA) guidance has been informed directly by a service user with lived experience. This enabled the Board to bring real-world insight, relevance, and accountability to the process.
- We continue to involve families as a matter of course in our Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews. This has ensured that families feel involved and can share their lived experience as part of the review process.

We maintain effective links with other regional partnerships, including the Regional Partnership Board, the Area Planning Board and the Public Service Board. This helps us to consider the governance processes and reporting mechanisms together with representation at Board meetings to attempt to streamline and reduce duplication.

We continue to work 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 maintain a close working relationship with our VAWDASV colleagues. Examples of this include routine updates at respective Boards, sharing a website, a joint pilot to bring together our Learning and Development subgroups and collaborative efforts in relation to mutual priorities, such as events during National Safeguarding Week and joint developmental workshops. 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.

12. INFORMATION, LEARNING AND TRAINING

• Information

Gwent Safeguarding Board's weekly Information Exchange continues to grow as a reliable method for disseminating safeguarding news, resources and training offers to our partnership network. Our Engagement and Communication subgroup oversees a programme of campaign work which enables the Board to develop and deliver its own programmes of communication or to support those developed by other partnerships or organisations. This group is planning to develop a series of themed podcasts to enhance our methods of reaching wider audiences about key safeguarding topics. In addition, our website continues to be reviewed and will be improved in the coming period.

• Learning

Gwent Safeguarding Board places learning at the heart of its business. A source of significant learning emerges from our safeguarding reviews. Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs) aim to create a single review process which incorporates a multi-agency approach where the criteria for one or more of the following reviews is met:

- Adult Practice Review (whether concise or extended);
- Child Practice Review (whether concise or extended);
- Domestic Homicide Review;
- Mental Health Homicide Review; and
- Offensive Weapons Homicide Review (pending pilot evaluations);

In the past year, the Gwent Safeguarding Board has been undertaking:

➤ Single Unified Safeguarding Review (domestic death related)	2
➤ Single Unified Safeguarding Review (child death related)	2
➤ Multi Agency Professional Forums	2
➤ Extended Child Practice Review	2
➤ Extended Adult Practice Review	1

The contexts of the reviews which we have started or completed over the past three years have helped to inform the Board's focus for the new 3-year period. These contexts have included complex / co-occurring needs specifically in relation to mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse and housing.

Transitional safeguarding has also emerged as a theme in several of our reviews, which will result in a joined-up approach to sharing and implementing the learning in the coming period.

These are some examples of the broader learning themes which are emerging:

- Adultification of children within assessments and professional language
- Trauma as a central and under-recognised driver of behaviour and need. This includes caregivers' lived experiences as being significant in understanding engagement and capacity in safeguarding individuals.
- Heightened risk during key transition points such as adolescence to adulthood or periods of homelessness.
- Housing instability and unsuitable or unsafe placements increasing vulnerability;

- **Training**

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 they can monitor the training activities provided, identify the training required and ensure agencies provide it. Gwent Safeguarding Board continues 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 Board acknowledges the ongoing support of statutory and non-statutory agencies in enabling the continued roll-out of regional multi-agency safeguarding training. As outlined earlier, this year partners have continued to invest considerable energy to ensure that the Board's training offer complies fully with the National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework.

We continue to commission training across a number of specialised safeguarding topics, which includes briefings and training from a number of providers on a range of subject areas, listed below. The demand for this training remains high. This year, the five Gwent Local Authorities (LA) commissioned external trainers to deliver Board's Group C safeguarding training to all eligible LA staff, which has been a significant achievement.

The following is a summary of the training provided by Gwent Safeguarding Board in 2025/2026:

Delivered By	Title	No of Sessions Delivered	Total No Trained
Gwent Safeguarding Board Delivery Group	Group C – Safeguarding Adults	3	59
Gwent Safeguarding Board Delivery Group	Group B – Safeguarding Children & Adults (Joint)	8	156
Gwent Safeguarding Board Delivery Group	Group C – Safeguarding Children	6	126
Barnardo's	CSA Signs & Indicators	3	45
Barnardo's	Harmful Sexual Behaviour	1	18
Barnardo's	Group C – Safeguarding Children (LA Commissioned)	16	310
10 and 23 – Dr Nicholas Marsh	Child Exploitation	1	19
10 and 23 – Dr Nicholas Marsh	Working with Boys & Young Men	1	16

10 and 23 – Dr Nicholas Marsh	Adultification	1	13
Lucy Faithful Foundation	Child Sexual Exploitation	1	22
Lucy Faithful Foundation	Digital Resilience	1	17
Lucy Faithful Foundation	Understanding HSB	1	18
Mind our Future Gwent	Keeping Mindful	2	34
JMG Training and Consultancy	Mental Capacity Act & Safeguarding for Children & Young People	2	14
JMG Training and Consultancy	Mental Capacity Act & Safeguarding for Adults	2	24
NRM Coordinator	NRM Awareness	5	62
New Pathways	Group C – Safeguarding Children (LA Commissioned training)	19	377
New Pathways	Group C – Safeguarding Adult (LA Commissioned training)	25	440
Safer Together	Complex Neglect	2	41
Wes Cunliffe	Child Exploitation	2	20
Edge Training	Self-neglect, Mental Capacity Act and Hoarding	3	54
JMG Training and Consultancy/Stori	Mental Capacity Act, Domestic Abuse, Coercive Control and Adults at Risk	2	32
BFE Consultancy	Duty To Report Children Masterclass	2	34
Venture Out	Duty To Report Adult Masterclass	2	37
TOTAL		111	1988

13. 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 2025/2026, 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 our frequent interactions with the Safeguarding and Advocacy Team, the Single Unified Safeguarding Review team and the other Regional Safeguarding Boards across Wales, in order to maintain this national connection.

Representatives from the Gwent Safeguarding Board 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 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 2025/2026, our Board 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 2025/2026 the Gwent Safeguarding Board did not use their Section 137 powers to access information.