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| Compliance With Safeguarding*- Child Welfare Annual Report 2024-25* |
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| OPCC Scrutiny Report |
| January 2025   1. PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION    1. This report is provided for the purposes of assurance and scrutiny.    2. There *are no* recommendations made requiring a decision. 2. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND    1. The Compliance with Safeguarding - Child Welfare Annual Report 2024-25 presentation provides an update on how statutory obligations to safeguard children and promote their welfare are being met under Sections 10 & 11 of the Children Act 20041. This has been done via a presentation attached in appendix 1. The aim of the presentation is to show what is working well, developing areas, and future aspirations in child protection.   Emphasis is placed on ensuring the voice of the child is central to service delivery and partnership working.   1. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION    1. Training is currently a key focus for the force for public protection teams; to bring about improved service delivery for victims, support staff and yield better outcomes in respect of both criminal and procedural justice. There is a national drive for the professionalisation of public protection and the (National Police Chiefs Council) NPCC are devising both a training programme for this which spans all areas of policing not just specialist Public Protection Unit (PPU) teams, across all ranks. This also ties with the Welsh Government work where Social Care has been leading in the development of national safeguarding training, learning and development standards across all agencies. The purpose of these standards is to make sure everyone in Wales gets consistent and good quality training, learning and development that is relevant to their role and responsibilities, and that we, as practitioners, can safeguard people to the best of our ability.    2. As part of this Learning and Development are linking with the Gwent Safeguarding Board to ensure compliance and consistency.    3. Key areas for focus for the force in the immediacy are:  * Training for PPU staff, including SCADIP (Specialist Child Abuse Development Investigation Plan) and ABE (Achieving Best Evidence). There is a young workforce and there have been shifting staffing numbers and it is a priority to ensure that staff have appropriate training to allow them to do the job. This is ongoing and effective, but it has been identified that this could be enhanced through joint training with partners within the safeguarding hubs and the development of some bespoke training for police officers who become Decision Makers within the Multi-agency Hubs. This is being developed and will be delivered through February 2025. * Compliance with national guidance and working with the NPCC as the national public protection training is being developed. An example of where this is being realised is in relation to the Soteria National Operating Model, which has developed guidance for the investigation of rape. Within Gwent extra-familial rapes with victims over the age of 13 are dealt with by the specialist Rape Investigation Team and whilst the NOM (National Operating Model) products are for adult rape, adherence to the Soteria principles ensures that all rape investigations remain victim centred, suspect focused and context led. * Within the force, particularly within public protection improved methods of monitoring workloads have been introduced and better supervisory support to prevent staff burnout and ensure that there is timely and proportionate investigation management, with a clear escalation process. * Following the decommissioning of the Missing Children Debrief Service, the multi-agency response to Missing Children and the weekly Missing Meeting and partnership response has worked well and there has been a marked reduction in both missing episodes, repeat missing and numbers of missing children. This has been a positive and there have been a continued strengthening of processes to develop holistic safeguarding and risk management plans. * A key area for development is to improve analytical data and use of this to proactively direct activity. This is an area that the force is aware of and taking steps to make better use of technology and understand any blockers. * Whilst the force has developed a CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) Problem profile, further work is ongoing to improve the recording, and analytical aspect of this. The force is working with Hydrant and the NPCC to improve our understanding and data recording. However, there are bespoke exploitation teams within force who effectively identify potential victims of CSE and CCE(Child Criminal Exploitation), identify offences/offenders and work with partners to effectively safeguard children and disrupt offenders. There is also greater cognisance of the risks of group based CSE and CCE within home environments.  1. COLLABORATION   Collaboration between agencies continues to be integral to effective child safeguarding and continues to work well. There are strong partnership relationships between the force, statutory agencies and the third sector. Examples of current collaborative work are contained within the presentation these include:   * 1. Integration of missing children’s teams in Safeguarding Hubs has enhanced communication and reduced missing episodes. It has improved risk management and includes the development with partners and use of the Philomena Protocol for looked after children and those identified as at risk of exploitation.   2. Future aspirations include broadening knowledge of exploitation among frontline staff and supervisors.   3. Regional and national collaboration is also taking place in Exploitation and Online Offending by the force POLIT (Police On-Line Investigation Team) team.   4. Multi-agency collaboration continues to be effective in the use of exploitation toolkits and strategy and MACE (Multi-Agency Child Exploitation) meetings are effective.   5. Investment in triage software for digital devices has improved investigation timeliness.   6. Operation Encompass has been embedded, improving information sharing with education safeguarding teams. This will be improved by the ongoing work with Barnardo’s who are currently carrying out a review of processes with a view of highlighting areas where we can improve the collective response to support children exposed to domestic abuse.   7. In relation to children in custody there is a revised policy and new processes with Social Services regarding mandatory PPN submission where children are stop searched.   8. The force has worked with Health and L&D(Learning and Development) to ensure that there is additional training for custody staff on neurodiversity and distraction tactics for children is ongoing.   9. There has been a keen focus within custody to reduce overnight detentions for children through robust safety planning and bail.   10. Together with partners through multi-agency meetings and governance we identify shared learning opportunities. This has been of particular benefit in relation to Adult and Child Practice reviews and national guidance in all organisations which allows us to support each other.  1. NEXT STEPS    1. Future Aspirations   The safeguarding and protection of children is an evolving landscape. The presentation highlights the ongoing efforts and future plans to ensure the safety and welfare of children through effective safeguarding measures and multi-agency collaboration. These include:   * Full capacity and capability within PPU’s to manage demand and provide effective service delivery * RIT staff to be both SCADIP and SADIP (Specialist Sexuall Assault Development Investigation Plan) trained. * Enhanced partnership working and improved risk recognition and early intervention for children. * Continued development of bespoke training and support for staff to ensure high-quality service delivery.  1. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS    1. The force has invested in the training of staff and the uplift of staff within the public protection teams, including main PPU and RIT. They have also commissioned a PIR (post implementation review) of staff within the Safeguarding Hub and RIT. In the latter, this resulted in a hybrid model and has yielded succession planning for CID, improved timeliness, service for victims and charge rates. It has also reduced sickness and attrition within the team. The PIR in relation to the Hubs will require increased investment (resources and training) but it is anticipated that this will also yield similar benefits.    2. It is anticipated that with increased focus on CSE and technological advances in online offending that investment will be required in new technologies to investigate and process data, but also require increased resources within safeguarding hubs and online investigation teams.    3. There are also difficulties in partnership funding for initiatives and also commissioned services. 2. PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS    1. The recent PIR of the Safeguarding hub and national reports have suggested that there may be a requirement for additional personnel considerations in relation to capacity and capability. This is in terms of resourcing numbers to meet demand, the impact on sickness abstractions on this and abstractions to undertake training, whilst maintaining effective service delivery. 3. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS    1. n/a 4. EQUALITIES & HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS    1. This report has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Strategic Equality Plan, and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.    2. In preparing this report, consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998. 5. RISK    1. If there are competing national directives this could lead to multiple areas requesting the same sources of funding options and competing training priorities. The potential risk of this is funding would not be available for all areas and priorities will need to be set.    2. Competing national drives and priorities impact upon how initiatives/plans are driven to implementation, for example Operation Soteria has been run as a project, but challenges with implementation were present when project management oversight was not in place. The force has established internal governance meetings to monitor progress against plans/programmes, but consideration should be given to formal project management of national plans.    3. Attrition through sickness can impact upon demand management and so this must be closely mapped and monitored. To mitigate this the force regularly reviews resources and flexes across workstreams. Scrutiny on staffing and demand must be maintained and established escalation processes utilised effectively. The risk contained in this, is that there are finite resources available and prioritisation across the force is often required. 6. PUBLIC INTEREST    1. In producing this report, has consideration been given to ‘public confidence’? Yes    2. Are the contents of this report, observations and appendices necessary and suitable for the public domain? Yes    3. If you consider this report to be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons:    4. Media, Stakeholder and Community Impacts:   Gwent Police mission is to improve Trust and Confidence through open and transparent engagement with our communities, media and our stakeholders and consideration of this has been given when compiling this report.   1. REPORT AUTHOR    1. Michelle Chaplin (Detective Superintendent Public Protection) 2. LEAD CHIEF OFFICER    1. Andy Tuck (Detective Chief Superintendent) 3. ANNEXES – Compliance and Safeguarding Presentation 4. GOVERNANCE BOARD AND CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL   15.1 This report has been presented to the following Chief Officer Board:  VAWG, SOC & Vulnerability Board chaired by: D/Supt Andy Tuck  Meeting date: 23/01/25  Actions and amendments arising from board: None  15.2 This report has been presented to the Scrutiny Executive Board:  Meeting chaired by:  DCC Brain  Meeting date: 04.02.2025  Actions and amendments arising from meeting:  To be checked for suitability for the public domain – this has been completed.  Any risks/issues identified: N/A      15.3 I confirm this report has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officers’ meeting.  Meeting chaired by: CC Hobrough  Meeting date: 11.02.2025    I confirm this report is suitable for the public domain.    **Signature:**  A signature on a white background  Description automatically generated  **Date:** 11.02.2025 | | |
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