



Compliance With Safeguarding- *Child Welfare Annual Report* 2024-25

OPCC Scrutiny Report

Oct 2025



1. PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 This report is provided for the purposes of assurance and scrutiny.
- 1.2 There are no recommendations made requiring a decision.

2. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Compliance with Safeguarding - Child Welfare Annual Report 2025-26 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 2004. The aim of the report 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.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Training remains 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 NPCC are devising both a training programme for this which spans all areas of policing not just specialist PPU teams, across all ranks.
- 3.2 This also reflects work to address the recent HMICFRS AFI specific to this point:
 - **The force needs to make sure that it has enough suitably trained and skilled staff to effectively carry out its safeguarding roles and functions.**
- 3.3 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. This work is continuing.
- 3.4 As part of this the Learning and Development are linking with the Gwent Safeguarding Board to ensure compliance and consistency.
- 3.5 Key areas for focus for the force in the immediacy are:



- Training for PPU staff, including SCADIP and ABE interviewing. The force has also developed an induction course for PPU – both for the 'Investigations team' and 'safeguarding hubs' to equip staff for the move to these departments and to compliment formal Child Protection and CID Training.
- There is a young workforce and there have been shifting staffing numbers. It is a priority to ensure that staff have appropriate training to allow them to do the job. This is ongoing and effective, within the safeguarding hubs bespoke training for police officers who become Decision Makers within the Multi-agency Hubs and an induction for officers moving to main PPU teams. This was developed following consultation partners and has been implemented since February 25. In conjunction with partners inputs are being developed to compliment this and training will be provided to recognise key risks within vulnerability. This material is currently under development.
- Compliance with national guidance is a continued focus and one that was also highlighted within the most recent HMICFRS. In response the Public Protection Unit have been reviewing current processes in relation to strategy discussions, multi-agency meetings and partnership information sharing. The force has also commissioned an internal vulnerability review, headed by the Governance Team to review all areas of vulnerability – including safeguarding and has implemented improved governance through the newly formed Vulnerability Project Board. This will ensure a renewed whole force approach to vulnerability and safeguarding.
- Learning from best practice through working with the NPCC as the National public protection training is being developed continues to be implemented. Such as applying the principles of the Soteria National Operating Model for the investigation of rape to child rape and domestic abuse not only ensures that all rape investigations remain victim centred, suspect focused and context led, as outlined in previous reports, but also ensures a holistic approach to other areas of vulnerability – such as DA where children as recognised as victims in their own right.
- Within the force, there has been continued focused upon improved methods of monitoring workloads and better supervisory support to prevent staff burnout and ensure that there is timely and proportionate investigation management, with clear escalation processes. This has also focussed upon consistency and includes more structure performance monitoring and review.
- The force response to missing children has continued to yield positive outcomes and the partnership response continues to show a marked reduction in 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 and work with CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales). This has been adopted pan-Gwent. Internal governance and scrutiny have been strengthened through tactical and strategic missing meetings.
- A key area for development remains improvement in analytical data and use of this to proactively direct activity. This an area that the force is aware

of and taking steps to make better use of technology and understand any blockers. This applies to missing and other areas of safeguarding.

- The force has developed a CSE Problem profile and 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. The force is also engaged with the National Task Force in relation to Operation Beaconport and the Baroness Cassey Review.
- There are bespoke exploitation teams within force who effectively identify potential victims of CSE and CCE, 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 CSE within home environments. The force has increased the age range for referral to MACE to 25 years old to mitigate the risks of transitional safeguarding for children subject to CSE to being Adults at Risk of Sexual Exploitation. This has been complimented by the establishment of a Sex Worker Liaison Officer embedded within the Exploitation which ensures that there is wider context and understanding of safeguarding and lived experience.

4. 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 include:

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 Pan-Gwent adoption of the Missing Meetings for children and multi-agency working with CIW as part of 'missing children' responses and work with the care homes.
- 4.3 Future aspirations include broadening knowledge of exploitation among frontline staff and supervisors.
- 4.4 A review of 'Operation Makesafe' delivery within Gwent has taken place and working with NPT and partners this will be re-invigorated within communities to raise community and partnership awareness of exploitation.
- 4.5 Regional and national collaboration is also taking place in exploitation through Online Offending by the force POLIT team. This is yielding significant improvements in reporting and intelligence collection in this area.
- 4.6 Multi-agency collaboration continues to be effective in the use of exploitation toolkits – which are currently being reviewed as are the structures for MACE meetings and how this links with other areas of criminality such as SOC.
- 4.7 Investment in triage software for digital devices has improved investigation timeliness in the cyber space.



- 4.8 Operation Encompass has been embedded, improving information sharing with education safeguarding teams. Since the last report Barnardo's carried out a review of processes for their work within 'Safer Futures' to seek improved collective responses to support children exposed to domestic abuse. This was focussed more on education than policing, but police input allowed greater context to support the work. This is now embedded within BAU and there are established review processes for data sharing, to prevent missed opportunity.
- 4.9 In relation to children in custody there is a revised policy and new processes with Social Services and multi-agency meetings to discuss children in custody. This ensures that child safeguarding is considered in all elements of policing.
- 4.10 Work is on-going to quality assure PPN submissions and quality of strategy discussion with a view to improving quality. This is in partnership with local authority leads.
- 4.11 Mandatory PPN submissions where children are stop searched are being monitored form part of a multi-agency review process with the Safeguarding Board.
- 4.12 The force continues to robustly focus within custody to reduce overnight detentions for children through robust safety planning and bail. Each case is reviewed as part of a scrutiny panel to provide assurances as to necessity and proportionality.
- 4.13 The force continues to work with partners through multi-agency meetings and governance to 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. This learning has evolved as the regional has moved to SUSR (single Unified Safeguarding Reviews), where the shared commitment to safeguarding remains strong.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 Future Aspirations

The safeguarding and the protection of children is an evolving landscape. The report highlights the ongoing efforts and the future aspirations of the force are to build on these further 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
- Appropriately trained staff within all areas of PPU and the wider fore – as safeguarding children is wider than PPU and spans all areas.

- Force wide training in safeguarding, ranging from the roll out of the NOM (National Operating Model) from Soteria to all areas and embedding best practice from this to areas of child protection and DA.
- Development of more effective processes within safeguarding hubs to meet demand and meet statutory time frames. This not only will ensure better service delivery but also meet the requirements of an AFI within the most recent HMICFRS Inspection.
- RIT staff and all PPU staff to be both SCADIP and SADIP trained. There are also plans for this to be rolled out to wider CID teams.
- Enhanced partnership working and improved risk recognition and early intervention for children continues. Examples being used of the Toolkit and the revised Makesafe awareness.
- Continued development of bespoke training and support for staff to ensure high-quality service delivery who are moving to work within PPU's and a change of placement rotation and Police Now and Direct Entry Officers to better prepare for working within safeguarding and undertaking joint work with partners.
- It is a future aspiration of the force to adopt some new initiatives and best practice from other areas such as revised governance for vulnerability to include a 'tactical tier' and to explore with partners new ways of working around the review and submission of PPN's.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 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 also reduced sickness and attrition within the team. Since last year a further PIR has taken place and this has recommended an uplift of staff to meet demand, and this is currently underway. This is important to child safeguarding as many rapes dealt with by the team are children.
- 6.2 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. This has been illustrated by previous increased investment within the DAST (Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Team and RIT).
- 6.3 It remains the case that 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. It is also likely to require increased resources within safeguarding hubs and online investigation teams to meet increased demand in the future.
- 6.4 There are difficulties in partnership funding for initiatives and commissioned services. There has also been apparent with capacity and capability in some services which has impeded the effectiveness of the services that they have been able to offer.



7. PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The recent PIR of the Safeguarding hub, further PIR of RIT and national reports that have recently focussed on responses to child protection 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 absences on this and absences to undertake training, whilst maintaining effective service delivery. There will also be a requirement for wider safeguarding and vulnerability training force wide to maintain CPD and this would have both financial and personnel implications to be effective.

8. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 n/a

9. EQUALITIES & HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.

10. RISK

- 10.1 It remains the case that where 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.
- 10.2 Competing national drives and priorities impact upon how initiatives/plans are driven to implementation, for example Operation Soteria was run as a project, but challenges with implementation were present when project management oversight was not in place. To mitigate this, the force established internal governance meetings to monitor progress against plans/programmes and put in place a project manager. However, this remains a continued risk and consideration should be given to formal project management of national plans.
- 10.3 Like last year, 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. Currently work is on going to explore this within safeguarding and to learn from modelling in other force areas. But, 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.

11. PUBLIC INTEREST

- 11.1 In producing this report, has consideration been given to 'public confidence'? **Yes**
- 11.2 Are the contents of this report, observations and appendices necessary and suitable for the public domain? **Yes**
- 11.3 If you consider this report to be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons: N/A

12. REPORT AUTHOR

- 12.1 Michelle Chaplin (Detective Superintendent Public Protection)

13. LEAD CHIEF OFFICER

- 13.1 Assistant Chief Constable Vicki Townsend

14. ANNEXES

N/A

15. GOVERNANCE BOARD AND CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL

- 15.1 This report has been presented to the following Chief Officer Board:
Operational Effectiveness Board chaired by: **CSU Ian Roberts**

Meeting date: **28 October 2025**

Actions and amendments arising from board: **None noted.**

- 15.2 This report has been presented to the **Scrutiny Executive Board:**

Meeting chaired by: **DCC Nicola Brain**

Meeting date: **31 October 2025**

Actions and amendments arising from meeting: **None.**



Any risks/issues identified: **None.**

15.3 I confirm this report has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officers' meeting.

Meeting chaired by: **Chief Constable Mark Hobrough**

Meeting date: **12 November 2025**

I confirm this report is suitable for the public domain.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Hobrough', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Date: 12 November 2025

