

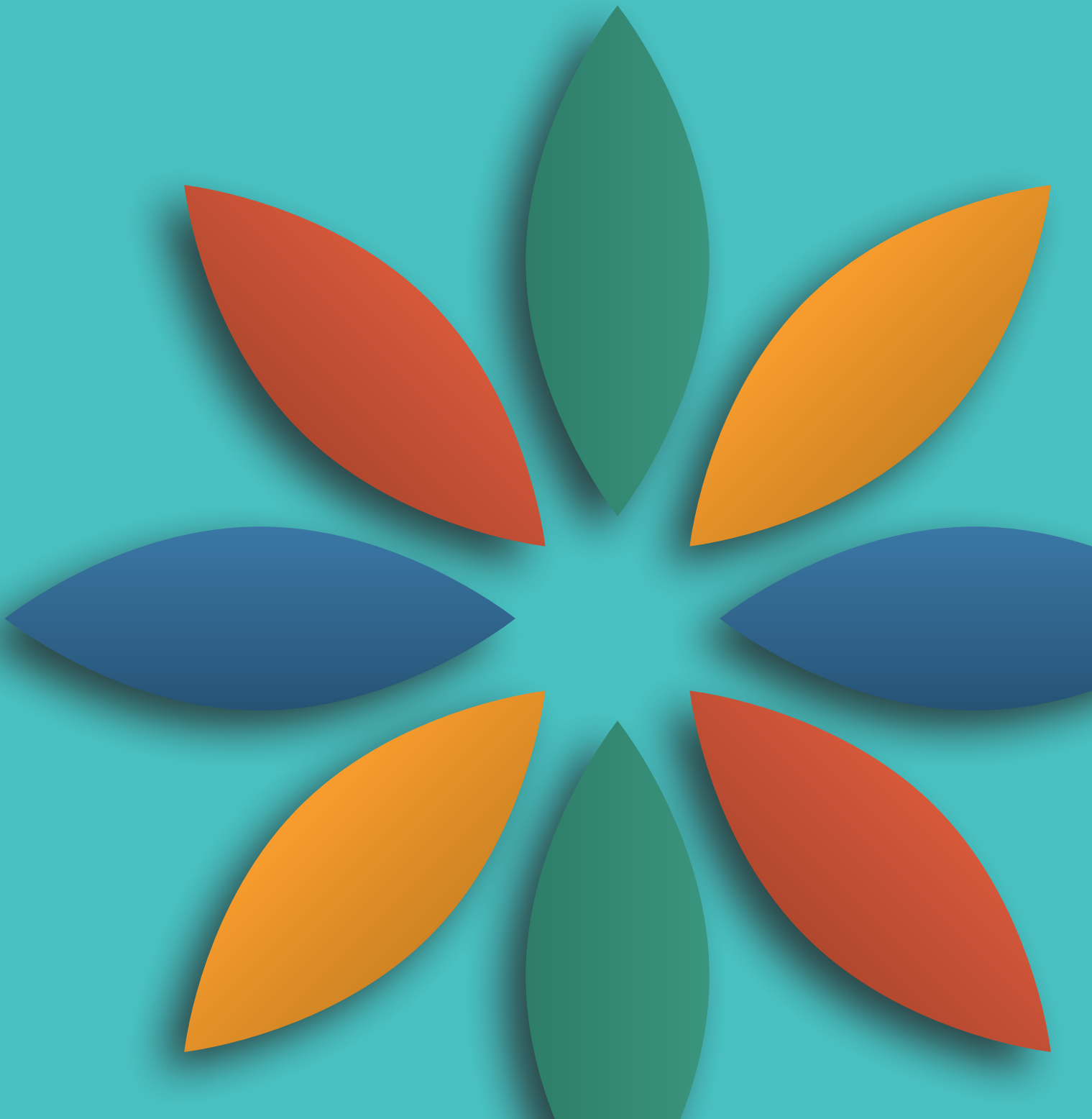


Bwrdd Diogelu Annibynnol
Cenedlaethol Cymru

National Independent
Safeguarding Board Wales



Annual Report 2019–20



Contents

Introduction	4
National Independent Safeguarding Board	5
Duties and Responsibilities	5
Annual Report Requirements	5
Membership	6
National Board's Support and Advice to Safeguarding Boards to ensuring they are effective	7
Other work undertaken by the National Board, or by supplementary groups set up by the National Board, and the outcomes achieved	8
Report on the Adequacy and Effectiveness of Arrangements to Safeguard Children and Adults in Wales	17
Recommendations to Welsh Ministers on how arrangements could be improved	38

Introduction

The 2019-2020 Annual Report of the National Board covers a period of time before the national lockdown as a result of the global pandemic caused by Covid-19. It is, however, being published at a time when the impact of the pandemic has affected every aspect of safeguarding in Wales and we are just emerging from the second national lockdown in 2020. Next year's annual report will inevitably be dominated by the pandemic and its impact on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Wales. Before focussing on all that has been achieved in safeguarding during the 2019-2020 year, the NISB would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the phenomenal response of the agencies and partners working in safeguarding and thank the workforce that has risen so professionally to the challenges they have faced in this 'new world'.

2019-2020 covers the first year of the NISB's second three-year term. At the end of this year we had a change in membership when Jo Aubrey resigned from the Board, and we both thank her for her contributions to the Board and wish her well for the future. In July 2020 we were very glad to welcome the appointment of Lin Slater as the sixth member of the NISB.

In the last Annual Report we committed to broadening the scope of 'reporting on the adequacy and effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard children and adults in Wales' beyond the focus entirely on the responsibilities and duties of Regional Safeguarding Boards. We have begun this process within this report but still have quite a way to go to include all bodies and agencies with safeguarding responsibilities. This work will continue as we map the safeguarding infrastructure in Wales.

No one working in safeguarding underestimates the challenges of protecting children, young people and adults from harm and in preventing such harm in all its forms and wherever it occurs. As this report demonstrates, safeguarding organisations and partnerships are working hard to address these challenges every day.

National Independent Safeguarding Board [NISB]

Duties and Responsibilities

The National Board has three primary duties set out in the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014:

1. To **provide support and advice** to Safeguarding Boards with a view to ensuring that they are effective
2. To **report on the adequacy and effectiveness of arrangements** to safeguard children and adults in Wales
3. To **make recommendations** to the Welsh Ministers as to how those arrangements could be improved (S.132 (2)).

In addition, eight specific responsibilities of the National Board are set out in *Working Together to Safeguard People*, the Part 7 Guidance on Safeguarding. They are that the National Board:

1. **works alongside** Safeguarding Adults Boards and Safeguarding Children Boards to secure consistent improvements in safeguarding policy and practice throughout Wales (para 246)
2. will **engage with the chairs** of the Safeguarding boards, and relevant inspectorates...at least twice a year (para 258)

3. will **stay abreast of evidence and policy** approaches to safeguarding and protection in other parts of the UK and beyond in order to learn from those and to evaluate Wales' relative performance (para 261)
4. where a **theme of concern** is identified... the National Board could recommend to Welsh Ministers that the matter be escalated to Welsh Government for exploration or to the relevant inspectorate (para 263)
5. will use mechanisms to regularly **engage with a range of expert reference groups**, practitioners and individuals (para 264)
6. will **publish** its own **annual reports** including any **work it is planning**. It will also hold an annual engagement event or events (para 265)
7. has a specific duty under section 133 (2) (d) of the Act to "**consult with** those who may be affected by arrangements to safeguard adults and children in Wales." It will use that duty to enhance its understanding of and extend its experience of safeguarding and protection in Wales (para 266)
8. will **consider the learning from the 'user engagement' activities** of the Safeguarding Boards (para 266).

Annual Report of the National Independent Safeguarding Board

The information that must be contained in the National Board's Annual Report is specifically described in The National Independent Safeguarding Board (Wales) Regulations 2015.

Membership of the National Independent Safeguarding Board



Jo Aubrey
(until July 2020)



Tessa Hodgson



Karen Minton



Jan Pickles



Jane Randall
(Chair)



Lin Slater
(from July 2020)



Tony Young

National Board's Support and Advice to Safeguarding Boards to ensure they are effective

National Board members worked alongside the Regional Boards throughout the year participating in Regional Safeguarding Board meetings and sharing their knowledge where appropriate. National Board members also met on a quarterly basis with Regional Safeguarding Board chairs and Welsh Government officials and agreed to develop a joint workplan in relation to common priorities.

Towards the end of 2019-2020 the UK faced the Covid-19 pandemic and Wales went into lockdown in March 2020. The NISB engaged from then on in the weekly meetings with Regional Safeguarding Board Business Managers and the fortnightly meetings between Regional Safeguarding Board chairs and Welsh Government.

There was a continued focus in this year on how to manage the learning, at a national level, from all of the safeguarding reviews undertaken by the individual Regional Boards. As a result, Cardiff University School of Social Science and School of Law and Politics were commissioned by the National Board to produce a thematic review of Child Practice Reviews in Wales. The National Board published the findings of this review in 2019 -2020.

Other work undertaken by the National Board, or by supplementary groups set up by the National Board, and the outcomes achieved

Development of collaborative working arrangements with stakeholders

Early in our life as a newly formed National Safeguarding Board (NISB), we took the decision to build on the existing relationships developed by our predecessors and reach further out to a broader set of key partners and stakeholders in the world of national safeguarding governance.

Having initiated dialogue with Social Care Wales, the Care Inspectorate Wales, the Older People's and Children's Commissioners and the Welsh Audit Office, we are pleased to have agreed a pattern of regular liaison and communication with these key bodies. This is in addition to those where regular liaison had already been established, e.g. Welsh Government, the Education Workforce Council and Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

What struck us early on however, is the extent to which the safeguarding 'landscape' in Wales is at best opaque and at worst somewhat invisible even to those within it. No single body or organisation has a clear overview of what this network looks like, what the respective roles and inter-relationships consist of or how they work together around national safeguarding practice and priorities. This prompted the NISB to initiate a new area of enquiry which is detailed elsewhere in this report.

We are also conscious however, that we have not yet exhausted the true extent of this network and that there are other key contributors at a national level, with whom we need to establish a working understanding.

Of particular significance during the year and into the start of the 2020-21 year has been our dialogue with various bodies as follows:

Welsh Government

The board meets on a monthly basis with the Deputy Director Enabling People, (Social Services and Integration Department) and the Head of Safeguarding, Advocacy & Complaints. This regular dialogue allows for a frank exchange of views, discussion of priorities and an opportunity to raise concerns around national safeguarding issues and agree pieces of work that benefit from the independent oversight of the NISB.

In addition the board met with the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services to discuss our last annual report and our recommendations to ministers were accepted. Progress against these recommendations are addressed later in this report.

In February 2020, at the invitation of Welsh Government, the NISB chaired the national conferences held in North and South Wales in relation to Adult Safeguarding.

Care Inspectorate Wales – this now regular exchange has enabled us to maintain close contact throughout the unfolding pandemic, to organise prompt responses to newly emergent safeguarding concerns and to support better communication with regional boards. In addition, we were represented on the stakeholder group that was convened to consider the pilot joint inspection framework as it was being trialled in an inspection of children's services in Newport in 2019. Initial feedback from the pilot highlighted the benefits of a much more 'joined-up' approach in the conduct of the inspection itself and that the regional partnership approach to safeguarding in Gwent was recognised for its positive contribution to what was seen on the ground in Newport.

Education Workforce Council (EWC) - dialogue has continued with this key national workforce regulator.

A key safeguarding issue that was drawn to our attention is the question of **Teacher Registration in Independent Schools**. Namely, that unlike all those who teach or occupy similar roles in state school across Wales, those working in independent sector schools, are not required to register with the EWC. Also, in the event that an individual commits a breach of the minimum requirements, teachers in independent schools are not governed by the same considerations and regulations as those employed in the state sector.

Registration with the EWC assures learners, parents, guardians, carers, fellow practitioners, employers and the general public that practitioners:

- » are appropriately qualified
- » have been deemed suitable for registration, based on their previous history
- » maintain appropriate ongoing levels of conduct and practice (by adhering to the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice) and have not, for example, been prohibited or suspended by the EWC
- » have not been barred by the Disclosure and Barring Service, the EWC or any of their equivalents in other countries

This absence of a legal requirement for teachers and learning support staff in independent schools to be registered with the EWC stands in stark contrast with other professions such as medicine, nursing, dentistry, physiotherapy, social work or the law, where those who work in private practice are subject to professional regulation, in order to protect/safeguard the public.

It is particularly disappointing that this issue was drawn to the attention of the Welsh Government as early as 2015 and subsequently by the EWC, and that despite a previously firm Ministerial commitment that this would be addressed within the programme for government, this significant gap in the underpinning safeguarding regulations remains unchanged.

It is understood that more recently the Children's Commissioner also sought reassurance from the Welsh Government that this would be addressed; similarly, the NISB also drew its concern regarding teacher registration in independent schools to the attention of the Deputy Minister for Social Services in late 2019.

Older People's Commissioner (OPC)

Initial dialogue with the OPC focused on key areas of shared interest including the need for a safeguarding data set that adequately reflects abuse in older people, how lessons are learnt from Adult Practice Reviews and how older people are meaningfully engaged as stakeholders.

As the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded in 2020 the NISB has also participated in the OPC Abuse Steering and Action Groups. This has enabled the board to highlight concerns raised in these groups with other bodies e.g. safeguarding concerns in care homes with CIW, and to support the communications strategy of the OPC at such a critical time.

Children's Commissioner for Wales (CCfW)

Six monthly meetings with the CCfW have given us the opportunity to share concerns of mutual interest and this year there has been a particular focus on the regulatory issues in independent schools which have already been described above. At the time of writing the CCfW, in seeking to resolve matters, has invoked her powers to initiate an independent review of the position and the role of the WG.

At the beginning of the national lockdown in March 20 which led to school closures across Wales, concerns were also expressed about the impact on the most vulnerable children being at home rather than in school and for those children who live with Domestic Abuse within their home.

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)

The Board has a representative on the WCVA Safeguarding Steering Group. The group meets quarterly and there have been three meetings since our new board came together. The Steering Group is well attended by a range of organisations from the Third Sector and the meetings have a video-link to North Wales. The WCVA, NISB and all partners around the table, provide general updates on current work and raise any questions and queries for the group to debate.

The main topics considered over the past year have included the increased demand for Adults at Risk training for the Third Sector, data protection issues, working with refugees and asylum seekers and cultural competence in safeguarding. A central repository for information on training opportunities in Wales would be helpful to the Third Sector as training beyond basic level safeguarding was vital. Trustees have also been identified as an emerging audience for training.

The group identified that Third Sector involvement and representation on Regional Safeguarding Boards was inconsistent and they have found difficulty in having sector concerns and issues put onto the agenda of RSBs.

Single Unified Safeguarding Review

The Board is working with Welsh Government, Regional Safeguarding Boards, and a wide range of stakeholders to streamline both the review processes and how learning from reviews can be captured and shared.

One of the outcomes of this work is to make learning from reviews easily accessible to all involved in training and practice and so enhance the future safeguarding practice of professionals such as police officers, social workers and all those working in health and social care in Wales.

This work builds on two pieces of research undertaken by Cardiff University's Professor Amanda Robinson and Dr Alyson Rees who were commissioned by the Board to undertake thematic reviews of four different types of death reviews: Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs), Mental Health Homicide Reviews (MHHRs) and Adult and Child Practice Reviews (APRs & CPRs). By 'reading across' different types of reviews learning was identified that was fundamentally relevant to all safeguarding practice. A key recommendation from the research was to establish a central repository or national library in order to promote the accessibility of completed death reviews to facilitate learning across Wales.

Could machine learning aid this process?

The Crime and Security Research Institute at Cardiff University designed a prototype repository capable of housing multiple types of safeguarding reviews and reports. Following this, funding provided by the NISB and Cardiff University School of Social Sciences allowed for the development of a robust coding framework that was used by the repository to both manually and automatically enrich the reports housed within the repository, allowing for complex searches across the repository to be performed and machine learning techniques to be applied to the data to enhance the understanding and learning that can be gained from the reports.

Evaluation of Integrated Multi-agency Operational Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales – Work Undertaken in Phase I

Despite the limitations inherent in reporting only on what transpired within a given financial year it is appropriate here to report on what was initiated within the 2019-20 period and what was achieved as a result, albeit early in the second quarter of the new financial year. This is in part justified because our plan had been to complete Phase I of this project within the financial year but as with every aspect of our lives, COVID 19 made that unachievable.

We wish to record our thanks to our researcher, Dr. Michelle Mc Manus, in nevertheless enabling the completion of the work early in the 2020-21 year, despite COVID 19. We also wish to record our thanks for the efforts and support we received from Regional Safeguarding Board colleagues, who without exception went the extra mile to contribute to the evaluation and who all gave generously of their time; we think that this signals just how important the evaluation is for us all.

We are also grateful, like so many, for the availability of effective technology in overcoming barriers to engagement and we note the importance that this had for our concluding stakeholder engagement session in advance of finalising the report.

The Story So Far – Phase I

Following dialogue between South Wales Police and Welsh Government concerning the effectiveness of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH), it was recognised that any consideration of operational safeguarding arrangements should be undertaken by an independent body and conducted on an All Wales basis.

The National Independent Safeguarding Board in Wales (NISB) subsequently agreed to sponsor a review of Multi-Agency Operational Safeguarding Arrangements (MAOSA) across Wales on the basis that this would be an independent programme of work focused on the identification of:

- » Best practice;
- » Opportunities for shared learning;
- » The strengths and weaknesses of defined national models
- » An all Wales map of the range and nature of front door safeguarding arrangements.

In acting as independent commissioner, the NISB prepared invitations to tender, reflecting the above in November 2019.

The successful bidder for **Phase 1** of the review was Liverpool John Moore's University, with Dr Michelle McManus, Subject Head of Criminal Justice, School of Justice Studies, as project lead. Commencing on 27 January 2020, the final report of findings and recommendations of Phase I, is available via the NISB website.

The primary focus of **Phase I**, was in essence to bring together a clear map of the different Multi-Agency Operational Safeguarding Arrangements (MAOSA) that exist in each of Wales' 22 local authority areas. At the outset and prior to Phase 1 of the evaluation, no one organisation was able to articulate the range and diversity of these arrangements across Wales as a whole, and it was seen as a necessary precondition for an evaluation of their effectiveness – '**how good are the arrangements**', that we first reach a clear view of '**what is**'.

Phase 2 of this work is described later in the report as part of the future work programme of the Board.

Communications and Social Media

The Board website at www.safeguardingboard.wales has been updated over the last year. The website attracted 5,672 visitors, with 87.9% of those new to the site and most browsing two to three pages during their visit. Most visitors arrived at our Home page from a Google search and in total there were 18,983 page views. After the Home page the publication of our 'Findings from a Thematic Analysis of Child Practice Reviews in Wales' published on 28/01/2020 was the second most visited area of the website.

The Board also has a limited presence on Facebook ((179 page likes) and Twitter (303 followers) and both our home pages have links to our website. We endeavour to use our social media presence for sharing safeguarding news, events and reports from across Wales.

National Board members contributed to a number of advisory and working groups throughout the year

Children's Residential Care Task and Finish Group

The Board has ensured that it maintains a watching brief in relation to this important area of national policy development, following on from our predecessor colleagues.

The remit of this group's work is very wide indeed and seeks to shape the nation's overall approach to the role of residential care, and related services for children looked after, within a positive and appropriately evidenced policy framework.

It is encouraging that this forum has provided a clear focus for the analysis of the challenges facing the sector and in stimulating the production of reports to assist in the process of setting direction; in making evidenced recommendations for change, to support delivery by the development of practice guidance, (for example in relation to the management of 'Out-of-Area' Placements,); to identify best practice models of residential care; and to think through the steps necessary to tackle the vexed questions associated with PACE and Secure Remands.

A well-attended national conference focusing on residential care, hosted by Social Care Wales took place on 20th February 2020 and for the first time in very many years provided an opportunity for those in the sector to celebrate its strengths and successes and to engage in the debate about change and improvement, much of which featured the work of the Task & Finish Group.

Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) Wales Reference Group

The Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse Wales Reference Group (WRG) was established to recognise the contribution of Wales in the context of the work of the Inquiry. The WRG is attended by survivor representatives, Welsh Government, and all relevant agencies. It is a two-way process ensuring IICSA are cognisant of the Welsh context and that we in Wales can contribute and learn from the work of the inquiry.

In 2019-20 the inquiry widened its focus having published its findings on institutions within the Catholic Church to a new investigation into child protection in religious organisations and settings. The investigation was thematic and reviewed the current child protection policies, practices, and procedures in religious institutions with a significant presence in England and Wales. Organisations falling under the remit of this investigation included non-conformist Christian denominations, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Methodists, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

The Inquiry published a range of research and reports including Children in Custody and those in the Secure Estate. The Truth Project continued to hear from victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in Wales and by partnering with a Deaf health charity gave Deaf people who were sexually abused as children the opportunity to share their experience.

The Contextual Safeguarding Advisory Board

This UK wide Advisory Board has representatives from across the UK. By attending NISB can ensure Wales is fully engaged in this agenda and keep up to date with the wide scope of contextual safeguarding initiatives across the UK.

In October 2019 the Contextual Safeguarding Network published a briefing on using the approach as a creative response to County Lines. There is an appetite in Wales for this approach which looks to understand, and respond to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Engaging with the context of young people's lives, recognising that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can end in violence and abuse. We know parents and carers can struggle to influence these contexts, which are more powerful than the parent-child relationships. A good short article on the story so far is at contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/a-2020-update-on-the-operational-strategic-and-conceptual-framework

National Board members contributed to the following consultations throughout the year

The NISB gave oral evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee of the Senedd in relation to the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Bill.

The NISB contributed to a consultation on the Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework which was run by Welsh Government in January 2020.

Future work planned by the National Board

Evaluation of Integrated Multi-agency Operational Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales – Our Plan for 2020-21

Prior to the commencement of Phase I, it had been the NISB's intention that Phase II would focus solely on an overall **evaluation of the range of multi-agency operational safeguarding arrangements (MAOSA)**, once mapped and understood in all its diversity. However, whilst Phase II will proceed to undertake that evaluation, it will now instead form 1 of 3 inter-related elements in an overall programme of system enhancement over the next 2-3 years and beyond. This widening of focus is in significant part due to the recommendations of the Phase I report, but it also stems from a strong pre-existing appetite amongst stakeholders nationally, for the wider strategic development of other key aspects of governance and improvement. The evaluation of MAOSA is therefore now 'Lot 1 of Phase II' of what has become a strategic programme of development, now being commissioned.

The two additional areas are concerned **firstly**, with the development of a **national statutory safeguarding "performance framework"** and **secondly**, with gaining a better understanding of the **'lived experience'** of those who find themselves, caught-up in one way or another in the statutory safeguarding process. Providers are now being invited to tender for these 3 areas of research and development as 'Lots 1, 2 & 3' respectively.

Taken together as an inter-related programme, the NISB believes that these three strands of work have the potential to significantly improve our capacity as a national professional community to understand 'what good looks like' across the whole system and place us in a better position to act to improve what takes place in the name of 'safeguarding' at every level. As a national board, we are excited at the prospect of being able to capture the strengths of the approach to safeguarding across Wales and to be able to identify insights into how this can be developed further, as a result of the work that will soon commence on Phase II.

An informative schematic which captures safeguarding and governance operating arrangements and key relationships in Wales.

The National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISB) is commissioning an expert organisation to produce an informative schematic which captures the safeguarding governance landscape in Wales.

It will encapsulate a clear identification of each governance body, categorised by principal function/role and with a clear delineation of relationships of accountability, show the existing channels of communication and information flows and provide a 'page-at-glance' infographic chart, capable of capturing the above variables in a way that maximises coherence and public accessibility.

Management and Evaluation of Digital Channels for the National Independent Safeguarding Board Wales (NISB)

The Board feels it is important to increase our social media presence, and our online activity and to this end we are aiming to engage the skills of a contractor organisation. We hope that this will actively support the promotion of our work and the work of our partners across Wales and ensure our social media presence is delivered in a professional, well-resourced and professional manner.

The organisation will be used to communicate & engage with and listen to our audiences using appropriate content and approaches for each e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and to provide this service bilingually.

Biannual thematic review of APRs

This will be the second biannual review of Adult Practice Reviews commissioned by the NISB. As before the objectives of the review are firstly to create a reliable and valid baseline of safeguarding learning from within a two year timeframe. Secondly to identify both the commonly occurring themes coming out of the reviews with regard to the settings in which the themes arise and information which is relevant to the needs of safeguarding practitioners.

Planning for the future of the NISB

At the time of publication of this report, this NISB will be half way through its three year term and it will be almost five years since the initial NISB commenced its work. As a board we therefore think it is both timely and necessary that Welsh Government review the terms and conditions and the arrangements for appointment to the next board. The specific areas that need to be considered include:

- » Role and function of NISB: Intent versus Reality
- » Resourcing: Financial, time commitment of board members and administrative support.
- » Transition arrangements from one board to the next
- » Timing of the public appointment process to ensure there is no gap between boards.

Report on the Adequacy and Effectiveness of Arrangements to Safeguard Children and Adults in Wales

Welsh Government

The Board made four recommendations to Welsh Ministers last year which were all accepted. The responses to date are detailed below.

Recommendation 1

Welsh Government should ensure that the Technical Guidance of the Social Care Performance Framework includes information about the abuse of older people by collecting data broken down by age group.

Response to Date: There will be a new Adults Receiving Care and Support Census developed which will include dates of birth. It was intended that the census would be developed this financial year and implemented from 2021/22. The Performance and Improvement Framework Executive Group (chaired by a Director of Social Services and has representation from AWHOCS, AWASH, SCW, CIW and Welsh Government) have approved this work to proceed, however, this is with caveats that delivery may be disrupted with ongoing Covid-19 response requirements. Once implemented, it will be an annual collection exercise. The changes to the safeguarding return will be a part of the 2020/21 and subsequent collections.

Recommendation 2

Welsh Government should work with Regional Safeguarding Boards, the NISB and other key stakeholder to develop a Performance Framework for Safeguarding in Wales.

Response to Date: As already described above this will be part of the work commissioned by the NISB in the year ahead.

Recommendation 3

Learning from Safeguarding Reviews. Welsh Government should consider how the national repository and machine learning can be embedded into mainstream review processes and finance secured to make it sustainable as a resource for the long term.

Response to Date: This is part of the work being undertaken by Welsh Government to develop a Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR) process and there is a dedicated task group looking at this issue.

Recommendation 4

Welsh Government should commission a thematic analysis of all safeguarding reviews on a biannual basis to identify themes and share learning on a national basis.

Response to Date: This will be part of the SUSR process in the future. However, to ensure momentum is not lost, the NISB will commission the second biannual review into Adult Practice Reviews as part of our 2020-2021 work programme.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Annual Report of the The Older People's Commissioner for Wales 2019-2020 sets out the ways in which the Commissioner is driving change to improve the lives of older people living in Wales.

As Covid -19 infection rates necessitated lockdown, focussed attention was given to older people in these circumstances. In June 2020 *Care Home Voices: A snapshot of life in care homes in Wales during Covid-19* was published giving a voice to people living and working in care homes about their experiences during lockdown. This report highlights some of the good practice that has made a positive difference to people as well as the issues and challenges encountered.

In August 2020 the report of the Older People's Commissioner *Leave no-one behind: Action for an age-friendly recovery* was published. The report examines the significant impact that Covid-19 has had on older people throughout Wales, and sets out the action needed across a number of key areas, including social care and health, the economy, and our communities, that must be delivered as we move forward to ensure that older people can participate fully in Wales's recovery and can access any support they may need.

The Commissioner has identified practical action that must be delivered immediately to tackle issues created by the pandemic, as well as longer-term action designed to tackle the wider structural issues that affect older people which have been exacerbated by Covid-19.

The report is based on evidence captured through extensive engagement with older people, who have shared their experiences with the Commissioner throughout the pandemic, as well as information and evidence gathered through ongoing engagement with bodies and organisations working with and for older people.

Alongside this work, the Commissioner draws attention to the many older people who experience abuse and exploitation, some repeatedly, in different ways and in different settings. Working with an Action Group of 30 organisations, members have developed a strategic action plan to tackle the safeguarding issues to be taken forward by the Action Group. The group has been raising awareness of the things that older people can do to keep themselves safe and the role the wider public can play in safeguarding older people including encouraging people to report any concerns they may have about an older person's safety or well-being.

The Commissioner maintains that while there is growing understanding of the scale and nature of abuse and crimes against older people, there is a lack of meaningful data needed to understand this more fully. There is concern that without better data relating to older people, particularly about abuse, inaccurate assumptions could be made about the extent to which older people are affected by these issues.

The Commissioner's programme of work has included mapping the support and services available for older people at risk of and experiencing abuse and bringing attention to those areas where improvements are required.

A research team has been established to review data and outcomes relating to 400 safeguarding cases across Wales. This aims to identify the issues that may lead to low levels of prosecution and the ways in which safeguarding investigations can be enhanced.

Training sessions have been provided for frontline professionals in health and social care and working with key organisations and public bodies the Commissioner has held a series of roundtable discussions. These identified actions to protect and safeguard older people, and opportunities for joint working to influence change and deliver improvements and will be taken forward in the year ahead.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Annual Report of the Children's Commissioner for Wales 2019-2020 provides details of the work undertaken and the actions planned to ensure that the rights of children and young people are promoted and protected in all areas of life. With continuing engagement with children and young people and in working with a wide range of organisations and Welsh Government much has been achieved that will positively impact on the safety and welfare of children.

The Children (Abolition of the Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act, received Royal Assent in 2020. The Commissioners office will continue to participate in the stakeholder groups around public messaging and parenting support over the coming years, as part of the commitments made during the passage of the Act as it comes into force in March 2022.

The protection of children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation in a changing and complex society is a continuing challenge and the Commissioner continues to convene and chair a national roundtable on this matter.

To understand the levels of this form of abuse in Wales more fully, new arrangements have been put into place under the Measuring Social Services performance: code of practice. This will now require local authorities to report on the number of strategy meetings relating to child sexual abuse/exploitation to assist in indicating the degree of prevalence in Wales. The Children's Commissioner has urged Welsh Government to progress Child Sexual Exploitation Guidance to ensure that a national picture is available to inform planning and decision making.

Attention is drawn to the small number of Welsh children and young people with complex mental health and social care needs who require support in a residential setting. The Welsh Government's planned review of current provision of these services has been welcomed.

The Children's Commissioner continues to emphasise the need for statutory change to protect children's rights to a suitable education and to be seen, and for their views including their views about their education and experiences listened to. The need for policy change was also reflected by the NISB commissioned Home Education Report in 2017 which recommended a register of all home educated children as well as for children to be seen on an annual basis. The Commissioner has announced the intention to undertake a review and publish the Governments functions regarding this area of policy-making.

In order to better safeguard those children educated in independent settings, the Commissioner has called on Welsh Government to amend the regulatory framework around independent schools and the Education Workforce Council to include a requirement that all teaching staff and all school leaders in independent settings register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC).

A further important area of work concerns children's experience of the care system in Wales. The Commissioner has welcomed Welsh Government's intention to undertake a reform of corporate parenting to ensure all services, such as health, education, social services and other community organisations, can promote positive outcomes and well-being for care experienced young people. Progress on sibling contact in adoption care planning continues to be monitored and the Commissioner has called on Welsh Government to strengthen ongoing support for those leaving care.

Advocacy is a crucial element of support for some children and young people, providing the means for them to express their wishes and feelings about decisions that impact on their lives. The Children's Commissioner continues to work towards and monitor children's access to advocacy through their policy work and Investigation and Advice Team.

The Commissioner has commented on the progressive leadership that Wales has shown in its commitment to recognising children's rights in regard to the delivery of youth justice, particularly with the publication of the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales, which sets out an ambitious programme of reform for the delivery of youth justice in Wales.

The Blueprint places an emphasis on prevention, children's rights, and understanding the impact of trauma on children's positive outcomes in regard to youth justice. The Commissioner has called for progress towards meeting the ambitions and delivering the actions set out within the Blueprint to ensure Wales can reform its delivery of youth justice services to better meet the needs of vulnerable children and to reduce offending amongst children in Wales.

The Commissioner notes that the United Kingdom will be examined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022, following on from the last examination which concluded in July 2016, and will be issuing a report along with the other UK Children's Commissioners in November 2020 which sets out the priority areas to be addressed.

Regional Safeguarding Boards

The NISB report on the arrangements to safeguard children and adults in Wales that are the responsibility of Regional Safeguarding Boards is reliant on the content of the Annual Reports of the Regional Boards.

There are six regions in Wales, in **2019-2020** after some reconfiguration, they were:

- » Cardiff and Vale
- » Cwm Taf Morgannwg
- » Gwent
- » Mid & West Wales
- » North Wales
- » West Glamorgan.

All six regions produced a single Annual Report to cover the work of the Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adult Boards. Three regions now have fully integrated children and adults boards with a single structure and a single set of priorities for children and adults at risk covered in a joint annual plan.

The other three boards have separate annual plans for children and adults and maintain discrete boards for children and adults although they work closely together. In all regions, the boards are supported by a shared Business Unit.

All regions produced their annual reports within the revised timescales agreed by Welsh Government. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the deadline for the publication of this year's annual reports was extended from 31st July to 30th September.

The content of the Regional Safeguarding Boards' Annual Report is laid down in para 209 in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard People – Volume 1 – Introduction and Overview'.

All the regions' annual reports contained the required content.

Membership of the Regional Safeguarding Boards

The statutory partners of the Safeguarding Boards include the local authorities for each region, chief officers of police, the Local Health Board, NHS Trusts providing services in the area, and the providers of probation and youth offending services. In addition, boards have representation from Public Health Wales Safeguarding Team, secure settings in the region and third sector agency representatives.

All the boards in 2019-2020 were chaired by Directors of Social Services.

All the Regional Boards provided a list of the members of their Boards. One region provided this information by role only, whilst the other five included the individuals' name as well as position held.

Only two regions provided data about attendance at Board meetings for the year. In each of these regions there was evidence of agency representatives who failed to attend a single meeting, or who only attended one meeting, all year. Both of these Boards noted the contributions made by agencies beyond attendance at the main board meetings and one Board described its escalation process for managing persistent non-attendance or non-engagement.

None of the Boards highlighted non-attendance/engagement as a factor that impacted on the functioning of the board or its sub-groups.

Actions Regional Safeguarding Boards have taken to achieve particular outcomes

All the regions identified the Boards' priorities for the year. What was less clear was what criteria had been used to determine why these were their priorities and what evidence base or learning had been used to select them. It was apparent that most Board's had reduced their number of priorities from last year, into more strategic objectives which incorporated many of the specific issues from previous years within them. The number of priorities for each board ranged between two and five.

As in previous years priority areas identified included improving the governance and effectiveness of the regional safeguarding boards; developing the safeguarding workforce through increased knowledge, training provision and supportive guidance; promoting participation with partners and the community; and safeguarding children and adults at risk in specific circumstances. Some new priority areas identified for this year included, safeguarding those at risk from the impact of domestic abuse, and the effects of compromised parenting on children's mental health and well-being.

Activities to achieve these priorities were described by all Boards and in this year's annual reports there was more evidence of what had been achieved and how this was informing further work that needed to be done or improvements to be made.

The extent to which Regional Safeguarding Boards have implemented their most recent annual plans, with particulars of how far any specific proposed improvements were implemented

Each Safeguarding Board is required to publish its Annual Plan for the forthcoming year no later than the 31st March. Each Board described a wealth of activity appropriate to safeguarding that had been undertaken throughout the year and as such appeared to be making progress in implementing their plans for each priority identified.

There was considerably more evidence this year of the Regional Boards describing in explicit terms how far specific proposed improvements had been implemented. A number of the boards described this in terms of:

- » what they said they would do,
- » what improvements were made,
- » what outcomes were achieved,
- » what are the next steps?

This made both the progress and the achievements of the Boards more transparent and gives some assurance around how the Boards were discharging their responsibilities.

One of the RSBs described using the Board Self-Assessment Tool at their development day but none made an overall assessment of how well they felt the board was functioning or if they had faced particular challenges or barriers to implementing their annual plans.

How Regional Safeguarding Boards have collaborated with other persons or bodies engaged in activities relating to the board's objectives

All the boards described how they have collaborated with other persons and bodies engaged in activities relating to safeguarding. There was evidence of a wide-ranging level of collaboration with regional and national bodies and institutions. Some key examples included working with:

- » Welsh Government: Single Unified Safeguarding Review project
- » Other Regional Boards: the production of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures
- » UK Safeguarding Boards: Serious Case Review Learning Event & shared learning
- » Community Safety Partnerships on Domestic Homicide Reviews and developing local strategies for Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)
- » National Independent Safeguarding Board Stakeholder Group – Multiagency Safeguarding Arrangements
- » Older People's Commissioner: Presentation during National Safeguarding Week
- » Police & Crime Commissioner: Early Action Together Project
- » Local PREVENT Team
- » Stop It Now Wales: Raising Awareness sessions
- » Office of the Public Guardian
- » Sport Wales
- » HMP Berwyn
- » NSPCC
- » Barnardos

Only one of the Boards made any reference to engagement or collaboration with the Older People's Commissioner or the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Both commissioners have key responsibilities in protecting and promoting the rights of their specific population groups and engage extensively with their stakeholders. They have safeguarding and stopping abuse as key priorities in their work plans, so this remains a potentially significant omission to both inform the work of the Regional Boards and to influence national safeguarding priorities.

Any requests the Regional Safeguarding Boards have made to qualifying persons under section 137(1) for specified information, and whether the requests were complied with

No such requests were made by any of the Regional Boards in 2019-2020. This means that this power has only ever been used on two occasions since 2016.

Achievements the Regional Safeguarding Boards made during the year

Each region described their achievements in different ways within their annual reports. Some describing all achievements and work in progress within the narrative of the report whilst others highlighted particular achievements of note or devoted a section of their report to describe their key achievements.

Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding Boards

Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Board described their achievements throughout the narrative of their report specifically in relation to each of their priorities and the themes from practice reviews. In addition they specifically highlighted other achievements:

- » National Safeguarding Week in 2019-2020, was a notable success with a range of events ongoing throughout the week ranging from the annual Safeguarding Children's Conference to the Professional Conference for Safeguarding Adults. The regional themes this year were domestic abuse and knife crime/gang cultures in line with some of the themes coming out from work throughout the year.
- » The launch of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, which took place on Monday 11th November in Cardiff and was opened by Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister for Health & Social Services.
- » A Domestic Abuse Workshop was held on Thursday 14th November, for multi-agency practitioners. An opening address was provided by Christine Grimshaw from the Welsh Government VAWDASV Team and focused upon a number of case studies, looking at reflective practice.
- » A Safeguarding Recognition Awards Ceremony was opened by Claire Marchant, Co-Chair of the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Safeguarding Board. The ceremony was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate an array of outstanding contributions to safeguarding in a multi-agency context and to recognise all the hard work of staff who have made a real impact on people's lives.
- » Launch of CV RSB Induction Pack Ensuring new members are informed and understand their role on the Safeguarding Board
- » Completion of regional strategies: Exploitation/ Training
- » Completion of specialist audit reports: Pressure Ulcer Damage reporting/ Critical Enquiry Framework/ Use of multi-agency chronology template
- » Established close links to Prevent team in Cardiff.
- » Joint working on Elective Home Education.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board

Cwm Taf Morgannwg highlighted their key achievements in highlighted sections throughout the report:

- » Operation Bramble – An investigation following the report of two children being approached by a male who attempted to entice them into his car. Following an investigation the suspect was identified and was arrested. On examining his computer, a history of offences with in excess of 100 victims being identified across the world was revealed. The safeguarding process required in this case involved significant information sharing and strategic discussions given the volume of victims in the case. It has highlighted the specific requirements of safeguarding for on-line offending which has seen significant increases in reporting.
- » Comments made by professionals working within the MASH to evidence how positive outcomes can be achieved.
- » Work has been undertaken to ensure consistency in the tactical discussion process within the MASH, where possible forming a risk management plan at an early stage following the sharing of information. Partnership work continues to make the MARAC process more efficient to allow more robust discussions in this forum focusing on the most complex and highest risk cases.
- » The introduction of Operation Encompass has been a real asset to intelligence sharing and the ability of schools to understand the home life of some of their pupils.
- » Carn Ingli became operational in November 2019. The home has provided trauma informed care and support for 5 children between the ages of 8-17 since this time.
- » The Board endorsed a regional Chronology Guidance document which supports professionals in completing chronologies for Child or Adult Practice Review Panels. Feedback has been positive and it has been noted on a number of occasions how completed timelines for cases have been succinct and focus on significant events.
- » The Welsh Ambulance Services Trust has developed and is trialing a safeguarding concerns reporting system using ipads for mobile staff and a desktop solution for all other staff members to improve reporting standards. The 'Docworks' solution provides direct written reporting to social services adult and child safeguarding teams from personnel at the incident scene. Copies of the safeguarding reports are retained in a 'document hub' for record retention. This allows for quality assurance and access to reports by safeguarding team members to support further enquiries.

Continued...

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board *(continued)*

- » The implementation of joint screening PPNs between Bridgend Children Social Care, South Wales Police and Early Help providing children and families with the right support at the right time and reducing the number of no further action referrals into social care. Ongoing work between South Wales Police and Early Help to improve the identification of vulnerability within families at an early stage was noted in the Justice Inspectorate report in February of 2019 as good practice. This has led to further developments with PCSOs being located within Early Help hubs and 3rd sector workers involved within front door activity into social care and early help services.
- » South Wales Police produced a short animation on practice review learning events for staff. The purpose of this was to provide an overview of the purpose of a learning event and what to expect. The feedback on this has been positive and is now being used by other agencies too.
- » Animation on Domestic Abuse: Young people from Merthyr Tydfil worked with the Board to produce an animation for young people, aiming to raise awareness about domestic abuse and violence by children and young people toward parents/carers. The Animation was due to be accompanied by a toolkit and launched through a regional event. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions. Despite the restrictions, the young people felt it was important that their message was aired, therefore the animation was uploaded to Facebook, Twitter and websites. On Twitter the animation has gained 710 impressions, 5 media views, has had a total of 36 engagements and 3 re-tweets. The original Facebook post by MTBWYF the animation gained a reach of 1877 people, 14 shares and 5 engagements. The second post by MTBWYF of the animation has reached 1855 people, 8 shares and has had 43 engagements. The animation was also uploaded on to the Board's Facebook page and has been viewed 1,683 times. Finally, the animation has been shared with the Welsh Government, Safe Lives, National Independent Safeguarding Board and the Victims Commissioners' Group.

Gwent Regional Safeguarding Board

Gwent highlighted their key achievements in a dedicated section within their Annual Report.

- » Operated under **joint arrangements** across both adults and children and is now confident that it has embedded these new strategic arrangements.
- » Mounted a **Young People's Conference**, which was opened by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, invited young people from schools, youth groups, and voluntary organisations to this consultative and awareness-raising opportunity. This event enabled over 25 organisations to provide an information marketplace for young people to attend, along with workshops to develop awareness of knife crime and bullying.
- » Finalised the content for the newly revised and first joint **Gwent Safeguarding Board Partnership Agreement**. This sets out the commitments made by organisations, across Gwent, in meeting their statutory duty to co-operate to safeguard
- » Published a number of **reviews**, including **one Child Practice Review, three Adult Practice Reviews and one Domestic-Adult Practice Review**. Completed and disseminated the learning from two Multi-Agency Professional Forums. Commissioned one Child Practice Review, one Domestic-Adult Practice Review and three Multi-Agency Professional Forums
- » Completed a second **Domestic-Adult Practice Review pilot** to continue to streamline the Domestic Homicide Review process across Gwent.
- » Formally adopted the newly **launched Wales Safeguarding Procedures** and invested considerably in the implementation process. This involved commissioning external information briefings to multi-agency staff; developing and publishing supporting regional guidance to aid decision-making; and beginning the process of revising existing training material
- » A review/revision of regional guidance, to cover both adult and children safeguarding and to align with legislative changes.
- » Finalising a performance framework which will give Board members assurance of safeguarding arrangements across the region. This included a commissioned self-assessment process for Board member agencies to review and evaluate their own safeguarding arrangements and to provide assurance to the Boards, using the Safeguarding Maturity Matrix tool.

Mid & West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board

Mid and West Wales had a dedicated section in their annual report for their key achievements.

- » Completion and Publication of Regional Policies and Strategies:
 - Sec 46 Use of Police Powers Protocol
 - A Community Safeguarding and Public Protection Incidents Policy and Procedure (for Regional Youth Justice Service)
 - A Regional Suicide Prevention Pathway
 - Information Sharing Protocol Launch
- » Executive Board Development Day
- » Local, Regional and National collaboration for Safeguarding Week
- » Regional Conference with Professor Eileen Munro celebrating the Signs of Safety Model across Mid & West Wales.
- » Pembrokeshire's Junior Safeguardians Conference
- » 'Conversation Café' held in Pembrokeshire County Council to launch the social media campaign and raise awareness of key issues and of the functions of the Boards
- » Modern Slavery training course of senior officers in Dyfed-Powys Police/ CPS
- » Cybercrime awareness raising event within DPP
- » Hywel Dda's Autumn Newsletter included articles on co-sleeping, self-neglect and information sharing, in keeping with regional themes
- » Formal launch of the NHS Safeguarding App
- » Launch of new safeguarding training and competency booklets in Hywel Dda University Health Board and Powys Teaching Health Board
- » Regional Fraud and Cybercrime Roadshow held across Police Force area
- » Online economic safety messaging disseminated online
- » Schools Liaison Officers visited schools to highlight the risks associated with sexting and cyberbullying
- » Posters raising awareness of DoLS, information sharing and self-neglect displayed in hospitals across Powys, with safe sleeping posters displayed in birth centres
- » Twice-daily messaging shared on Pembrokeshire Junior Safeguardians social media accounts on themes pertinent to young people
- » Launch of Powys Teaching Health Board's DoLS Policy and Procedure
- » 'Tea and a chat' events facilitated by Ceredigion and Powys' Junior Boards on the theme of sexting
- » Pizza and bowling evening held by the Pembrokeshire Safeguardians with key decision makers in Pembrokeshire County Council, to strengthen links and break down barriers
- » Training in Powys Teaching Health Board on adult safeguarding, scams and online safety
- » All-age self-neglect Learning Event held by Hywel Dda

North Wales Regional Safeguarding Board

- » North Wales highlighted their key achievements in a dedicated section within their Annual Report.
 - » Partnership Review: aligning the priorities of various groups under the umbrella of the Vulnerability & Exploitation Board, this will include VAWDASV & Modern Slavery.
 - » Training and support for the roll out of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures
 - » Extensive work programme around the role of the Lead Practitioner/Section 126 Enquiries
 - » Basic Safeguarding Training for Commissioned Services
 - » Training event in relation to Contextual Safeguarding
- » The Disclosure & Barring Service have been presenting to the regional practice delivery groups around the lack of referrals to the service from Wales.
 - » Development of Procedures/Protocols/ Guidance to Support Practitioners
 - Protocol for the Management of Multiple Reports of Incidents between Adults at Risk
 - Multi Agency Guidance for the Support of Employees Affected by Critical Incidents
 - Dealing with a Different Point of View
 - Out of Area Safeguarding Arrangements
 - What's Different Guides Children/ Adults

West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board

West Glamorgan referenced their work throughout their report linked specifically to the work of their subgroups and each priority area. They did not highlight any particular achievements so the following has been extracted from the narrative.

Exploitation

- » Harmful Sexual Behaviour is better understood across the region and this is attributable to the work currently undertaken by Barnardos and the NSPCC.
- » Criminal exploitation is much spoken of across the region and both LA have seen an increase in strategy meetings for this form of abuse.
- » Quantitative MISPER data is better understood across the region.
- » Data on financial abuse is clearly captured across both regions.
- » Developed the Exploitation guidance to support practitioners and the guidance has been shared widely across the region.
- » A 'reflect and refresh' session took place in October 2019 to update trainers on the new exploitation policy and other developments.

Quality & Performance

- » s135 audit of partner agencies/ population of data dashboard.

Policy, Procedure & Practice

- » In April 2019 the PPPMG met as a joint adults and children's group for the first time with the chairs of the previous groups taking on a co-chairing role.
- » In 2019 the Board changed to the West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board, a task and finish group was set up to review all the current policies to ensure they were updated and amended to reflect the changes to the Board.
- » Reviewed nine policies to reflect the changes to the regional board this year.
- » Wales Safeguarding Procedures: A consultation group was set up in order to ensure all attendees fed into the development of the procedures.
- » Developed a toolkit to assist reviewers and chairs of Child and Adult Practice Reviews

Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking

- » 4 courses took place within West Glamorgan in June and July 2019

Extent to which each member of the Regional Safeguarding Board contributed to the boards' effectiveness

All the regions recorded attendance at meetings and roles undertaken by members as evidence of their contribution to the board. Four regions included accounts from partner agencies on their specific contributions. There were however, obvious inconsistencies in that not all partners of the board provided this information and some national organisations contributed reports in some regions and not in others. The contributions from third sector organisations was also very limited.

Three boards described how individual agency contributions to the board had been assessed and reviewed. Their annual development day or s135 self-assessment audits were methods used.

Two boards made specific reference to the 'Hot Topic' section of their meetings which allowed partners to share issues of particular concern, and also a number of specific presentations members had made to their board.

This year, Gwent Boards had the first joint inspection in Wales. The outcome of the inspection, where the focus was child exploitation, was that Gwent Safeguarding Boards were found to be coherent in the organisation of business and was well supported by the multi-disciplinary group. The joint inspectorate also found the joint Safeguarding Board arrangement in Gwent to have benefits in sharing cross cutting information and shared learning.

An assessment of how the Regional Safeguarding Boards used its resources in exercising its functions and achieving its outcomes

As in previous years, most boards acknowledged that resources used to support the work of the Regional Safeguarding Boards were not confined or restricted to financial contributions from statutory partner agencies. Further that members provided a significant amount of their time to support the boards and their work.

All boards used the national funding formula to assess and identify annual financial contributions from statutory partner agencies. Half the boards did not published their total income in monetary terms. Five of the six boards described the contributions from individual agencies as a percentage of the whole. The sixth board suspended contributions from the statutory partners in this year to reflect the current economic climate. They used money in their reserve budget to cover the year's board expenditure.

Turning to the expenditures of the Regional Boards, the total figures ranged from £137,852 to £355,055. The total expenditure nationally was £1,227,497, a drop of £81,620 on the previous year. At a regional level, three boards increased their expenditure, one spent exactly the same amount as the previous year and two reduced their expenditure. However, the reconfiguration for Cwm Taf Morgannwg and West Glamorgan Boards make direct comparisons with last year more difficult.

The largest proportion of expenditure in all regions was for the Business Units with costs ranging from £102,202 to £288,655 this year compared to £81,166 to £288,655 for the previous year.

Four regions included the costs of training in their expenditures, whilst two regions excluded their training budgets.

Only two regions included the costs of undertaking reviews. In one region this related to costs for child practice reviews and a second region included the cost of both child and adult practice reviews. It is unclear how many reviews this covered in each case.

While the facts of the income and expenditure were stated, the reports continue to lack narrative around the rationale for both the income requested from agencies and how expenditure was determined in relation to achieving the boards' outcomes.

No board made a comparison to the previous year's contributions or expenditures nor did they declare whether regions had over or underspends and if there were surpluses that are carried over year on year. This is significant in that the one board had accumulated a surplus sufficiently large to fund the work of the board for a whole year. In the interests of public transparency, the Regional Boards should consider publishing their financial accounts as part of their Annual Reports.

Any underlying themes in the way the Regional Safeguarding Board exercised its functions, as shown by an analysis of cases it has dealt with, and any changes it has put into practice as a result

This includes lessons learnt from child practice reviews and adult practice reviews carried out by Safeguarding Boards and from other reviews, audits and investigations.

Not all boards described specific themes in their reports although they reported that the work had been done and themes had been identified and discussed at board. The themes identified within the reports can be grouped into eight broad areas:

1. The Person's Voice including: advocacy/ mental capacity & consent
2. Information Sharing and a Holistic View of a Person's Life
3. Exploitation: child sexual exploitation/ coercive control
4. Importance of Accurate and Detailed Recordings
5. Families who are not (or are seeming) not to be cooperating/ Disguised compliance
6. Self-Neglect
7. Communication – cross boundary cases
8. Training - safeguarding raising awareness/aspects of the child or adult protection processes.

In addition the regions also identified some case specific issues:

- » Lessons from investigations into local services
- » Transition pathways from childhood to adulthood
- » Children's mental health
- » Substance and alcohol related co-sleeping/selling alcohol to adults in charge young children and babies.

When and how children and adults exercised an opportunity to participate in the Safeguarding Board's work and how this contributed to the Board achieving its outcomes

A wide variation in the boards' approaches to participation continues but all regions engaged with stakeholders to some extent this year. They did this either directly as a board or by utilising the participation arrangements of their constituent agencies. Some examples are listed below but as in previous years there is a marked difference between the level of activity with children and young people and with adults. Only three boards gave examples of engagement work with adults. A situation that the board's need to address.

Examples of Engagement with Children and Young People

- » Boards which have Junior Safeguarding Boards or engagement with other wider groups for children and young people.
- » The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) developed a report on behalf of the Board on 'How to embed Participation/Engagement of Children and Young People'
- » Young people focus groups to consult on the effective and appropriate methods to engage children and young people within the Regional Safeguarding Board,
- » A survey to scope the knowledge of children and young people on the Board's existence, purpose and work streams.
- » Consultation with young people around their experiences of working with services, including schools and family support services.
- » Consultation with over 1600 young people on safeguarding issues as part of an online survey where mental health was highlighted as their most concerning safeguarding topic.
- » Sessions held at school with a group of vulnerable young people to ascertain what is important to the young people in terms of safeguarding and how the board could provide support.
- » Boards hosted Children and Young People's conferences,
- » The UHB has a Youth Board that are consulted on any documents, policies, procedures relating to children. Members of the Youth Board were invited to take part in the multi-agency work when preparing for National Safeguarding Week.

- » A digital app called Mind of My Own which is a fully accessible digital app to enable children and young people to share their views, wishes and feelings using a safe digital tool. Mind of My Own apps are designed and conscientiously co-produced with young people for young people.
- » Two young people have enrolled as young inspectors and will be visiting Local Authorities across Wales that apply to be Kite marked against the National Participation Standards.
- » Two young people worked on developing a foster carer training session which they entitled 'If You Were Me'.

Examples of Engagement with Adults

- » A number of survivor's stories were delivered during National Safeguarding Week.
- » A section included within the RSB agenda called 'Service User Story'.
- » Supporting Change Team engaged with the most complex families to share ways of working that they feel have most benefitted them and how they feel the service can be developed to achieve greater success.
- » Adult Services staff attended relevant groups to gather views.
- » Feedback from adults at risk has been gained to inform future service delivery.
- » A survey was carried out by the police with victims of domestic abuse to gather feedback in relation to the service they have received.

The number of Adult Protection & Support Orders (APSO) which were applied for in the Safeguarding board area, how many were made, and how effective they were.

Adult Protection and Support Orders enable an authorised officer, and any other person specified in the order, to enter 'premises' to speak to an adult suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect in private, to establish whether or not they can make decisions freely, to assess whether the person is an adult at risk and establish what, if any action should be taken. The statutory guidance defines 'premises' as including domestic premises, a residential care home, a nursing home, a hospital or any other building, structure, mobile home or caravan in which the person is living.

There were no applications for an APSO in Wales this year.

Any information or learning the Safeguarding Board has disseminated, or training it has recommended or provided

All boards have a training sub-group that oversees their training priorities and the delivery of the regional training programme in relation to safeguarding processes. Additional training, learning and information sharing is done in a variety of ways:

- » Conferences:
 - Adult Safeguarding
 - Contextual Safeguarding
 - Children & Young People Conference

- » Learning Events & Practitioner Forums: Homelessness
- » Service User Stories: Child Sexual Exploitation
- » 7 Minute Briefings: Themes & lessons learnt from reviews
- » Digital/On-line training:
 - RSB Website: Reports/Practice Reviews/ Audits
 - Awareness raising animation in relation to Practice Reviews
 - Safeguarding video produced by young people
 - Videos and podcasts: Wales Safeguarding Procedures
 - E-bulletins: Annual Plan/Annual Report/ Approved policies/learning from
- » Specific subject training events:
 - Child & Adult Practice Review Training (reviewers and chairs)
 - Domestic Abuse
 - County Lines
 - Skills & Knowledge Framework for Adverse Childhood Experiences
 - Signs of Safety
 - Working with children who have experienced developmental trauma
 - Child Exploitation

How Safeguarding Board has implemented any guidance or advice given by the Welsh Ministers or by the National Board

The Regional Boards reported that they implement guidance and advice given by either Welsh Government or by the National Board. Whilst some boards did not give any specific examples others highlighted the quarterly meetings with Welsh Government and the NISB as the mechanism for this. Specific examples given were:

- » Responding to national consultations in relation to a national action plan for child sexual exploitation and statutory guidance for elective home education
- » Seeking advice from Welsh Government about regulation of nurseries operating for less than two hours and difficulties with compliance with the Ask & Act training requirements.
- » Using the NISB workplan, annual report and thematic analysis of child practice reviews to shape some of the work on the board's development day.

Other matters relevant to the work of the Safeguarding Board

Regions reported matters that were of particular note to them. Two regions highlighted reviews of their functions, governance and board structures leading to changes in the way they were working.

Two regions have been reflecting on collectively what difference the boards were making and how do policies, procedures and training either improve or change practice.

One region particularly noted the impact on services at the end of reporting year on the emerging global pandemic coming so soon after the floods in February 2020.

Additional Matters to Report

In addition to the safeguarding arrangements described in the Regional Board's Annual Reports, the National Independent Safeguarding Board is also required to highlight examples where learning information and resources have been shared between Safeguarding Boards within a Safeguarding Board area or between Safeguarding Boards across Wales.

Wales Safeguarding Procedures

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures were launched during National Safeguarding Week on 11 November 2019 and have replaced the All Wales Child Protection Procedures and the Wales Interim Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Abuse.

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures are not available as printed copies and are only available in digital format. The Wales Safeguarding Procedures App is available for download on both iPhone and Android devices, via the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. They can also be viewed in English or Welsh by accessing the following links: www.safeguarding.wales
www.diogelu.cymru

The launch of these procedures is a significant milestone for Wales and both the procedures and the app have been very well received. Cardiff & Vale Regional Safeguarding Board led on the development and launch of the procedures and they with the rest of the Procedures Project Board can be justifiably proud of this achievement.

Shared Learning

All Regional Safeguarding Board Managers met regularly to share good practice, discuss areas of development and identify emerging national safeguarding trends. They also collaborated to plan National Safeguarding Week, developing regional themes and sharing good practice.

Child and Adult Practice Reviews were regularly shared to ensure learning was disseminated across the regions.

Shared Resources

All Regions produced a single Annual Report covering the work of both their Adults and Children's Boards. They also all have shared jointly funded business management arrangements.

All Boards are working on joint governance arrangements between their adult and children's' boards which is reflected in their subgroup structures and multiple examples of joint children and adult groups.

Recommendations to Welsh Ministers on how safeguarding arrangements could be improved

Four recommendations to Welsh Ministers were made by the NISB last year in our annual report. Two of those recommendations were firstly the creation of a national safeguarding review repository and embedding machine learning into a sustainable resource for the long term and secondly, commissioning a thematic analysis of all safeguarding reviews on a bi-annual basis. These recommendations have been incorporated into the Welsh Government led work on creating a Single Unified Safeguarding Review process for Wales. NISB is contributing to this work, and as such will monitor completion and implementation of these aspects of the project.

The other two recommendations are still to be implemented and remain relevant so are repeated below:

Safeguarding Adults at Risk

From our analysis of the Regional Boards Annual Reports it is apparent that the arrangements for safeguarding adults at risk is still less developed than the arrangements for safeguarding children. It is also evident that there is not sufficient data or information about abuse of older people in Wales. A view supported by the work of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and highlighted in her State of the Nation (October 2019) Report.

Recommendation 1

Welsh Government should ensure that the Technical Guidance of the Social Care Performance Framework includes information about the abuse of older people by collecting data broken down by age group.

From Activity to Performance

All Boards provided data relating to their safeguarding activity but there was little or no analysis of what this meant, how this provided assurance to Boards about the quality of their safeguarding arrangements or how they intended to use it to inform any improvement plans.

This is the third year that the NISB has recommended to Ministers that the Regional Boards, the National Board and Welsh Government identify and agree measures which reveal something of the adequacy and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. There is agreement from Welsh Government that this work will be commissioned by the NISB as part of its work programme for 2020-2021 but has yet to be completed.

Recommendation 2

Welsh Government should work with Regional Safeguarding Boards, the NISB and other key stakeholders to develop a Performance Framework for Safeguarding in Wales.

Safeguarding in Education

There continues to be a need for statutory change to protect children's rights to appropriately safeguarded educational settings and provision and this should include listening to their views about education and their experiences of education in all types of settings. This need for policy change was reflected by the NISB commissioned Home Education Report in 2017 which recommended a register of all home educated children as well as for children to be seen on an annual basis.

Despite the consultation that took place in 2019, the Welsh Government Minister for Education recently announced the decision to suspend the publication of the Statutory Guidance for Children Electively Home Educated in Wales. A decision that is of significant concern to both the National Board and Regional Safeguarding Boards. Also as a result of this decision, the Children's Commissioner for Wales has announced the intention to undertake a review into the Government's functions regarding this area of policy-making. A position that the NISB welcomes and supports.

Recommendation 3

Welsh Government should set a timetable for the publication of the Statutory Guidance for Children Electively Home Educated in Wales as a matter of urgency.

The second significant issue for safeguarding in education at this time is the lack of the requirement for teachers in Independent Schools to be registered with the Education Workforce Council. This is unlike all those who teach or occupy similar roles in state school across Wales. Also, in the event that an individual commits a breach of the minimum requirements, teachers in independent schools are not governed by the same considerations and regulations as those employed in the state sector.

It is particularly disappointing that this issue was drawn to the attention of the Welsh Government as early as 2015 but despite a previously firm Ministerial commitment that this would be addressed within the programme for government, this significant gap in the underpinning safeguarding regulations remains unchanged.

Recommendation 4

Welsh Government should honour the commitment made to amend the regulatory framework around independent schools and the Education Workforce Council to include a requirement that all teaching staff and all school leaders in independent settings register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC).

Role and Function of NISB

At the time of publication of this report, this NISB will be half way through its three year term and it will be almost five years since the initial NISB commenced its work. As a board we therefore think it is both timely and necessary that Welsh Government review the role and function and the arrangements for appointment to the next board to ensure that the expectations in relation to the NISB match the reality.

Recommendation 5

Welsh Government should undertake a review of the future of the NISB specifically to consider:

- **Role and function of NISB: Expectation versus Capacity**
 - **Resourcing: Financial, time commitment of board members and administrative support.**
 - **Transition arrangements from one board to the next**
 - **Timing of the public appointment process to ensure there is no gap between boards.**
-



**Bwrdd Diogelu Annibynnol
Cenedlaethol Cymru**

**National Independent
Safeguarding Board Wales**



Keep in touch



www.safeguardingboard.wales



[@NISBwales](https://twitter.com/NISBwales)



[safeguardingwales](https://www.facebook.com/safeguardingwales)

