

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015 / 2016

**COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: 21ST MARCH 2016

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

Agenda Item No: 3

**Local Authority Arrangements to
Support Safeguarding of Children**

Author: Giovanni Isingrini - Group Director Community & Children's Services

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to update the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on progress in respect of the recommendations arising from the Wales Audit Office report on Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children, 2014.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members consider the update in respect of the recommendations arising from the Wales Audit Office report on '*Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children*' 2014 and form a view on the adequacy of progress to date.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 In 2014, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) conducted '*Review of Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children*' (appendix 2).

3.2 The specific local report issued to Rhondda Cynon Taf set out four recommendations, ie

- Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.
- Ensure all safeguarding risks are identified; ensure corporate and service level risks are integrated; and agree actions to mitigate these.
- Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.

- Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.
- 3.3 Appendix 1 provides an update of progress in respect of the four recommendations contained in the Wales Audit Office Report for Members' consideration.
- 3.4 Subsequent to the publication of the report on Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children, in 2015 the Wales Audit Office issued a national report '*Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales*'. The recommendations contained therein superceded the recommendations in the earlier local report which related specifically to children.
- 3.5 A more detailed report on progress on the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements that apply to children, young people and adults at risk was presented to Cabinet on 17 March 2016, a hyperlink to the Cabinet Report can be found in the progress update.

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APPENDIX 1

<p>What are we trying to achieve, the outcome :</p>	<p>Strengthened arrangements to safeguard children in Rhondda Cynon Taf</p>
<p>Why we need to do it:</p>	<p>The Council recognises that Safeguarding children and adults at risk is one of its priorities. The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is providing a joined up service and enabling a quicker more streamlined response to concerns about children and adults at risk.</p> <p>In 2014 the WAO undertook a review of our Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children. Within the report that was issued as a result of the review, the WAO made the following proposals for improvement. In July 2015, these proposals were further reinforced by a national WAO report in respect of Corporate Safeguarding, ie Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils.</p> <p>Safeguarding has been identified as item for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme for Children and Young People and Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committees</p>

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WAO Proposal for Improvement		Update	Next Steps	Delivery Date	Responsible Member/ Officer
WAO SC 01	Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.	<p>A draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy is being presented to Cabinet for consideration/approval on 17 March.</p> <p>http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2016/03/17/Reports/AgendaItem11CorporateSafeguarding.pdf</p> <p>The proposals contained within the draft Policy broaden the requirements from safeguarding children to include safeguarding adults at risk. A Lead Member (Cllr A Morgan) and Corporate Lead Officers (Directors of Corporate and Frontline Services and Community and Children's Services) have been identified. The draft Policy complements the statutory responsibilities for Safeguarding already in place in Community Service and Education. It also takes account of the requirements of the SS&WB Act, the draft Corporate Plan and the Well-being goals as set out in the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. There is a Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan in place and a working group has been established to ensure it is delivered.</p>	<p>Agree the draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy and continue to implement the Action Plan, in order to progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, publication, distribution and electronic acceptance • Awareness raising and targeted Learning and Development programme for staff and elected Members in respect of Corporate Safeguarding • Monitoring actions that mitigate the Corporate Safeguarding Risks • Preparation of information to be included in the Director's Report 	31/3	Directors of Corporate and Frontline Services and Community and Children's Services

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WAO Proposal for Improvement		Update	Next Steps	Delivery Date	Responsible Member/ Officer
WAO SC 02	<p>Ensure all safeguarding risks are identified; ensure corporate and service level risks are integrated; and agree actions to mitigate these.</p>	<p>A Corporate Safeguarding Risk Register has been prepared which sets out four key risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If robust performance monitoring and management arrangements in respect of corporate safeguarding are not in place then the ability to track progress, ensure on-going review and scrutiny could be hindered. • If staff do not possess the relevant skills and knowledge in respect of identifying and reporting a potential safeguarding issue then the safety of a child and/or an adult at risk may be compromised. • If the Council cannot demonstrate delivery of training to all relevant staff then its ability to evidence robust and adequate training in respect of corporate safeguarding is hindered. • If safeguarding concerns are not reported to an appropriate central service then the consistency in respect of these are assessed and managed could be compromised which could result in the safety of a child and/or an adult at risk being compromised. 	<p>Monitor Corporate Safeguarding risks as part of the Audit and Scrutiny work programmes.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Directors of Corporate and Frontline Services and Community and Children's Services Audit Manager</p>

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WAO Proposal for Improvement		Update	Next Steps	Delivery Date	Responsible Member/ Officer
WAO SC 03	Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.	The proposals contained within the current draft Corporate Safeguarding policy set out strengthened Governance and performance management arrangements including annual reporting from all Services that will also inform the Director of Social Services Annual Report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the performance information • establish and implement consistent reporting arrangements • monitor compliance with training and provision of annual reports 	30/3	Directors of Corporate and Frontline Services and Community and Children's Services

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WAO Proposal for Improvement	Update	Next Steps	Delivery Date	Responsible Member/ Officer	
WAO SC 04	<p>Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.</p>	<p>Arrangements are in hand to deliver Corporate Safeguarding awareness raising session to elected Member in a Conference in April. The nature and background for the training will be outlined in a presentation to Democratic Services Committee on 30 March.</p> <p>An initial awareness raising programme is being delivered to over 700 Managers, from 11 February to end of March. This initial awareness raising programme will be supplemented by more targeted training which is commensurate with jobs and roles for elected Members, staff and managers.</p> <p>To accompany the implementation of the policy, an awareness raising campaign is being prepared. The 'branding' to reflect safeguarding children and young people, adults at risk has been completed.</p>	<p>Continue to implement awareness raising programme through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intranet • Pay inserts • Poster <p>Roll out targeted training on priority basis.</p> <p>Include Corporate Safeguarding in the Staff Booklet and Induction Checklist</p> <p>Include Corporate Safeguarding requirements in Member's role description to be agreed as part of the constitution in May</p> <p>Complete consideration of single point of recording information in respect of Safeguarding Training.</p>	<p>As set out in item 1 above</p> <p>To start in May 2016</p> <p>April 2016</p> <p>May 2016</p> <p>May 2016</p>	<p>Directors of Corporate and Frontline Services and Community and Children's Services Head of Organisational Development</p>

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales



Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

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Issued: October 2014

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The person who delivered the work was Brian Jones.

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Summary report

Background

1. The safeguarding of children is everyone's responsibility. Local authorities have a statutory duty to have in place safeguarding arrangements which include strategic planning, support and guidance for all providers of relevant services in their area, and the direct provision of some services themselves. In particular, local authorities have a duty to work in partnership with others to secure the safeguarding and wellbeing of children in their area, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).
2. Employees and volunteers who work with children have specific safeguarding duties and responsibilities. Local authorities and schools must ensure through their Human Resources (HR) and personnel arrangements that adequate checks are in place to ensure that employees and volunteers are of good character and that their working practices are managed and monitored. Local authorities must also ensure that there are processes in place to investigate and record safeguarding allegations made against staff, teachers and support staff, and volunteers.
3. Members, Chief Executives and senior managers need to ensure that they have proper oversight of the safeguarding arrangements that are in place across the authority. They should actively seek and gain assurance that arrangements are operating effectively, as without this they will be unable to demonstrate that they have discharged their statutory obligation in respect of safeguarding.
4. During the period March to May 2014, the Wales Audit Office completed a review of the assurance and accountability arrangements of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (the Council) for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are being adhered to. The study examined what the Council itself has done to seek assurance that its arrangements to support safeguarding are effective by reviewing how the Council is discharging its safeguarding responsibilities at all levels: cabinet, senior management team, scrutiny and individual officers.
5. The study focussed on answering the following: **Do the Council's governance and management arrangements provide assurance that children are safeguarded?**
The main questions that the review sought to answer were:
 - Are there clear governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children?
 - Is the Council monitoring and evaluating appropriate information, which provides assurance that it is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children?
 - Are assurance systems operating effectively?

Review findings and conclusions

6. We examined policies relevant to safeguarding; reports to Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny; and set out below our conclusions based on the extent to which the Council has put in place, and is operating, effective management and assurance processes and controls for safeguarding. As part of this study we made available an online survey for elected members, senior managers, education, schools and leisure staff to test the Council's arrangements for safeguarding. Surveying is valuable because it provides an insight into the Council from the perspective of the people who make decisions and do the work. It also allows us to determine the relative strengths or weaknesses of local safeguarding arrangements and identify where councils can make improvements. The detailed survey findings for the Council are set out in [Appendix 1](#), although we include headline conclusions where relevant in each of the following sections. Finally, we also provide a short summary of our review of whistleblowing arrangements.

The governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children have some weaknesses which the Council is addressing

7. The Council has created the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board (CTSCB) with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. The CTSCB Operational Subgroup is seen as the body with responsibility to address child protection and safeguarding issues. There is a Children's Services Policy Group with a brief to ensure that account is taken of changes in legislation and guidance; and Children's Services and multi-agency policies, procedures and protocols are all monitored and developed by the CTSCB Operational Subgroup. Our survey found that that marginally fewer respondents strongly agreed or agreed that safeguarding and protecting children and young people is a high priority for the Council than the survey average, 91 per cent compared with an all-Wales survey average of 96 per cent.
8. The All Wales Child Protection Policy 2008 is regarded as the substantive safeguarding policy with the local 'Policy for Safeguarding Children and Young People' representing a summary and key contacts for general use. However, we found the 'Policy for Safeguarding Children and Young People' is a very short document and needs to be more comprehensive, clearly setting out the Council's corporate arrangements for safeguarding to provide assurance that all areas of operation are covered and the policy is working effectively. For example, whilst the 'Policy for Safeguarding Children and Young People' refers to the Council's website for more information, this approach does not provide assurance for those who have management responsibilities for overseeing delivery of safeguarding that the Council is discharging its duties effectively.

9. The Director of Social Services is the Lead Director for Safeguarding, and all senior officers and elected members are clear about this. Staff we spoke to understood who the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Child Protection is and the remit of the role. However, our survey found that fewer Council respondents than our survey average stated they knew who the Council's Designated Officer for child protection is, 58 per cent in the Council compared with our survey average of 67 per cent. In addition, only 28 per cent stated they knew who the Council's lead councillor for child protection is, well below our Welsh survey average of 44 per cent.
10. The CTSCB has established a risk management system to oversee its work but there is no specific Council risk register for safeguarding. The lack of a formal and active risk management approach for safeguarding is acknowledged by key officers and a proposal to develop such a system has recently been considered by Cabinet with work due to start in the near future.
11. Our survey found that fewer respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Council deals effectively with specific incidents concerning safeguarding and protecting children and young people, 74 per cent in the Council compared with our survey average of 82 per cent. We also found that fewer respondents felt that the Council is good at safeguarding and protecting the children and young people that use its services with only 74 per cent strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement compared with our Welsh survey average of 85 per cent. Finally, a lower proportion than our survey average strongly agreed or agreed that the Council informs all parents how their children are safeguarded and protected when using Council services and schools, 44 per cent compared with 55 per cent.

The Council's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its safeguarding responsibilities to children have some weaknesses which the Council is addressing

12. There is regular reporting to Cabinet of performance on child protection. This focuses on Children's Services' statutory performance indicators and reports of Independent Reviewing Officers. Scrutiny Committee and the CTSCB also receive performance reports on a quarterly basis. The Council currently reports its performance against 311 performance indicators across all services. At the end of 2013-14 Children's Services were below target for 28 per cent of their indicators. There is performance reporting on safe recruitment and training, safeguarding in schools and individual Children's Services' cases including Looked after Children.
13. Human Resources policies are all reviewed annually and there is a comprehensive safe recruitment checklist in use. All HR staff have undertaken safeguarding training and an HR officer attends all Children's Services' job interviews. Our survey found that 92 per cent of respondents in Rhondda Cynon Taf are clear how their job contributes to safeguarding and protecting children and young people, fewer than our Welsh survey average of 95 per cent. In addition, only 63 per cent stated that their responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children and young people were

explained to them when they started their current role in the Council/school, compared to the Welsh survey average of 75 per cent.

14. Training Plans submitted show that three-year plans have been set out and that thousands of staff have been targeted to receive one or more of four levels of safeguarding training. All school staff are required to attend safeguarding training with enhanced training for Designated Safeguarding staff. Volunteers are also trained in safeguarding. An electronic system records training attended and can issue reminders to non-attenders. Safeguarding training is made available to elected members but those we interviewed expressed concern that it is not robust and needs to be enhanced to equip elected members to undertake more effective scrutiny and challenge.
15. The Council is well below the survey average for the number of people who have received training on safeguarding in the last six months – 20 per cent compared with the Welsh survey average of 32 per cent – and has considerably more people who have never received safeguarding training, 20 per cent in the Council compared with our survey average of 10 per cent. This highlights that further work is needed to roll out training on safeguarding.

The Council's approach to identifying and acting on improvements in its safeguarding arrangements has some weaknesses which the Council is addressing

16. Internal Audit undertakes reviews of safeguarding arrangements in schools using the Estyn Safeguarding Self Evaluation procedure. This has identified areas for development in schools and an action plan is currently being prepared. In addition, in April 2014 the outcome of an Internal Audit review of the operation of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) procedure was reported to the Audit Committee. The report highlighted that in only a few cases had a new employee started before the DBS check was completed. In response, from the review findings the Council is implementing a new electronic DBS service to reduce the time required to complete such checks.
17. The evolving quality assurance system has been instrumental in developing new protocols, which are designed to improve aspects of service delivery.
18. All Council staff are required to take basic data protection training by making use of an e-learning facility, which supplies information and requires the learner to take and pass a final test before they are considered to have completed the process. The system issues reminders to staff and managers if the process remains uncompleted.

Overall whistleblowing arrangements are generally sound, but a number of weaknesses in policy, process and training need to be addressed

- 19.** The Whistleblowing Policy is clearly written and provides reassurance to potential whistleblowers; however, it is out of date and requires updating to reflect the changes in legislation from June 2013. The Whistleblowing Policy exists as a standalone document and is easily accessible on the Council's intranet. The Council is aware that it faces a significant challenge in reaching those staff without computer access and has prepared a number of documents over and above the policy itself to raise awareness. The current whistleblowing arrangements, themes, trends and outcomes are not subject to member challenge and scrutiny and caseload information is not recorded in a formal, central way. The Council has not done anything to check the level of awareness of the whistleblowing amongst its staff and there are no publicity arrangements in place at present. The Council has completed Disciplinary and Grievance training which covers whistleblowing but opportunities exist to strengthen and expand training.

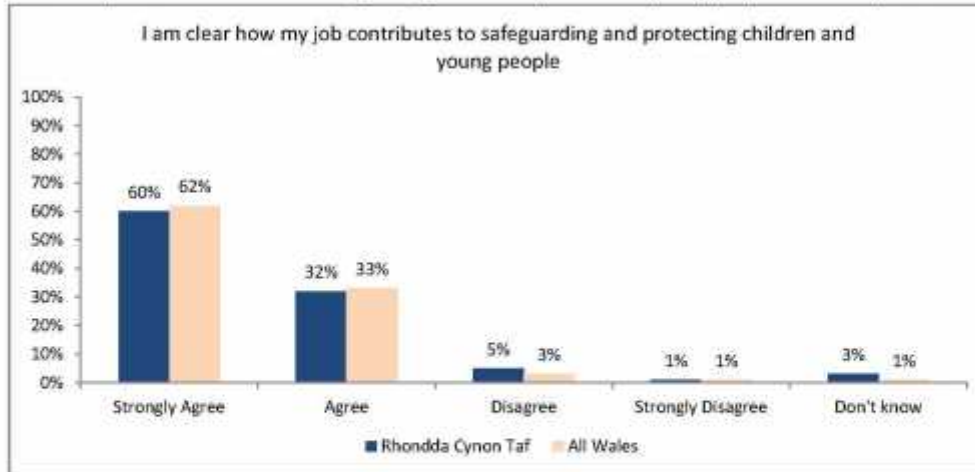
Proposals for improvement

P1	Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.
P2	Ensure all safeguarding risks are identified; ensure corporate and service level risks are integrated; and agree actions to mitigate these.
P3	Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.
P4	Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.

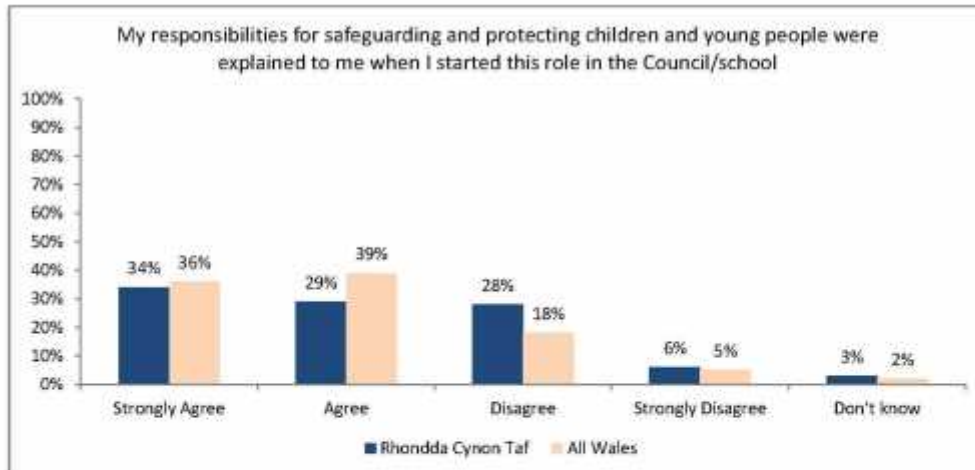
Appendix 1

Summary of survey findings

Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Rhondda Cynon Taf



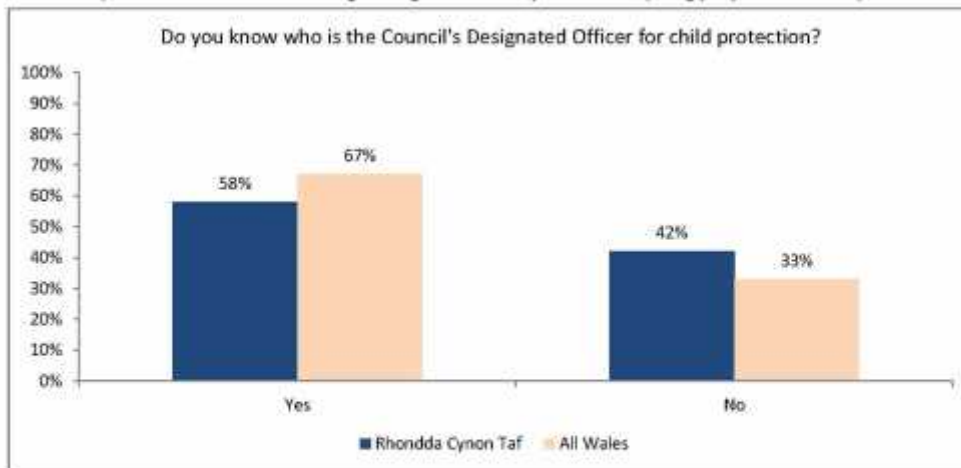
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	-	65	35	5	1	3
				60%	32%	5%	1%	3%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	6	1235	664	53	12	26
				62%	33%	3%	1%	1%



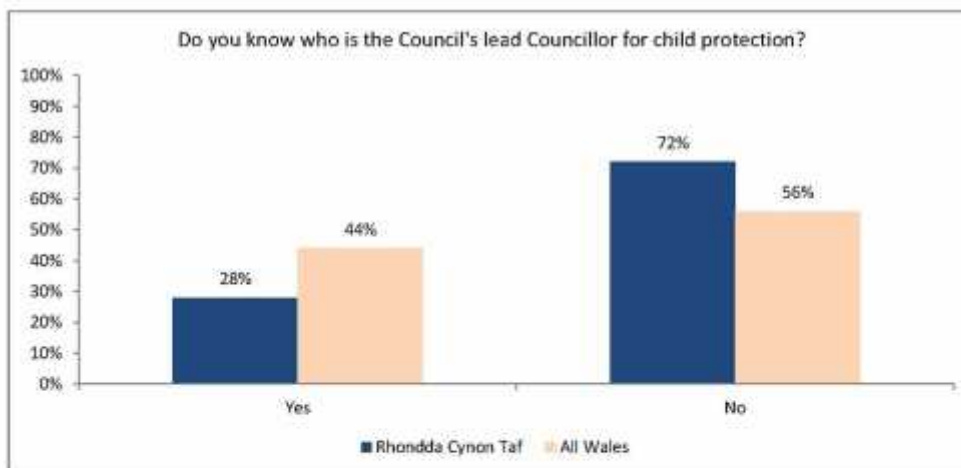
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	-	37	32	30	7	3
				34%	29%	28%	6%	3%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	10	716	773	358	104	35
				36%	39%	18%	5%	2%

* To make the report easier to read, percentages are shown to nearest whole percentage point. It is therefore possible for the individual figures not to total exactly to 100%.

Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Rhondda Cynon Taf

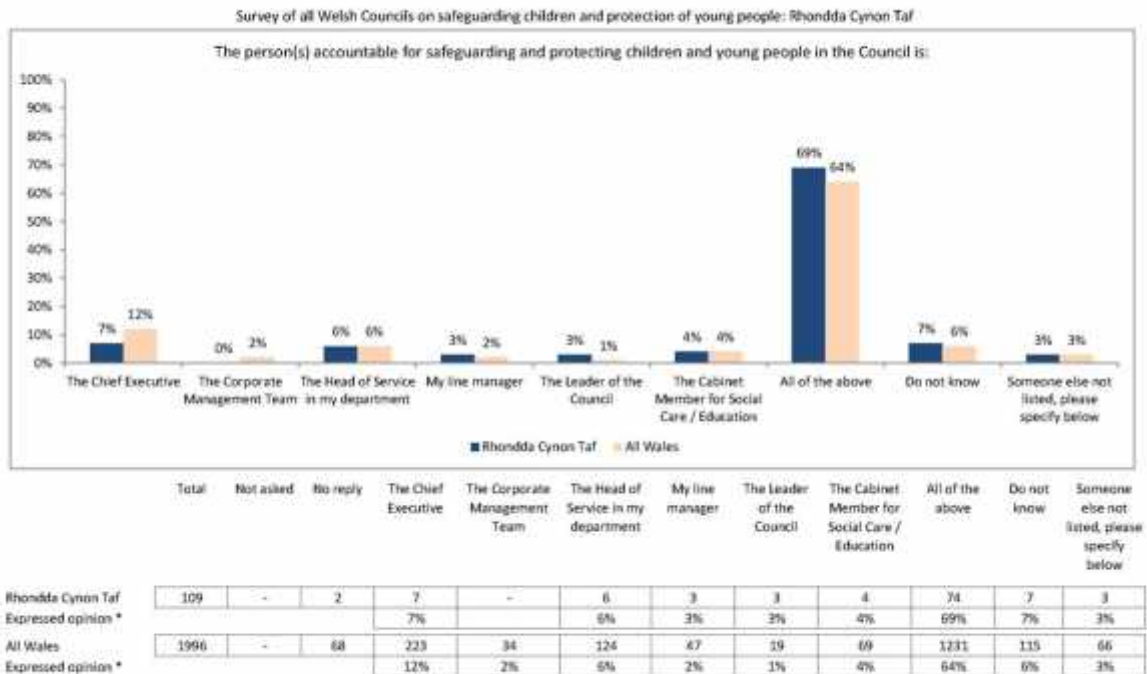


	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Rhondda Cynon Taf	109	-	-	63	46
Expressed opinion *				58%	42%
All Wales	1996	-	13	1337	646
Expressed opinion *				67%	33%



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Rhondda Cynon Taf	109	-	-	30	79
Expressed opinion *				28%	72%
All Wales	1996	-	13	881	1102
Expressed opinion *				44%	56%

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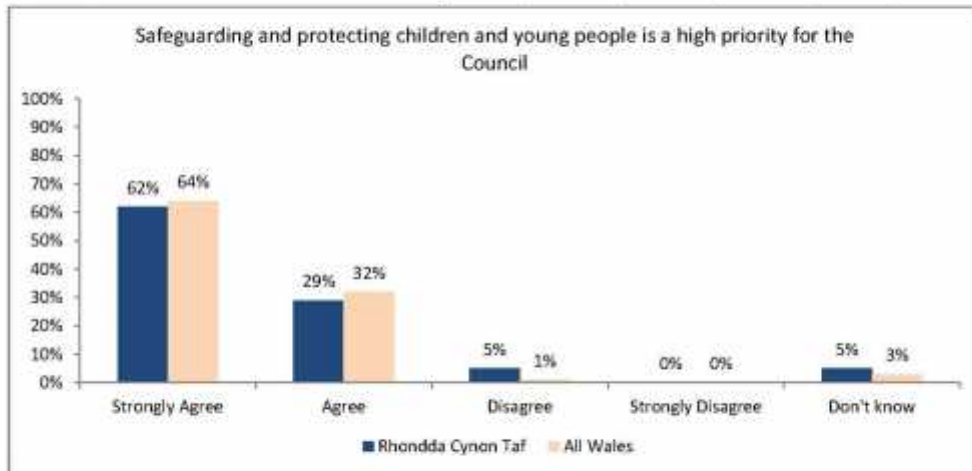


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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Rhondda Cynon Taf



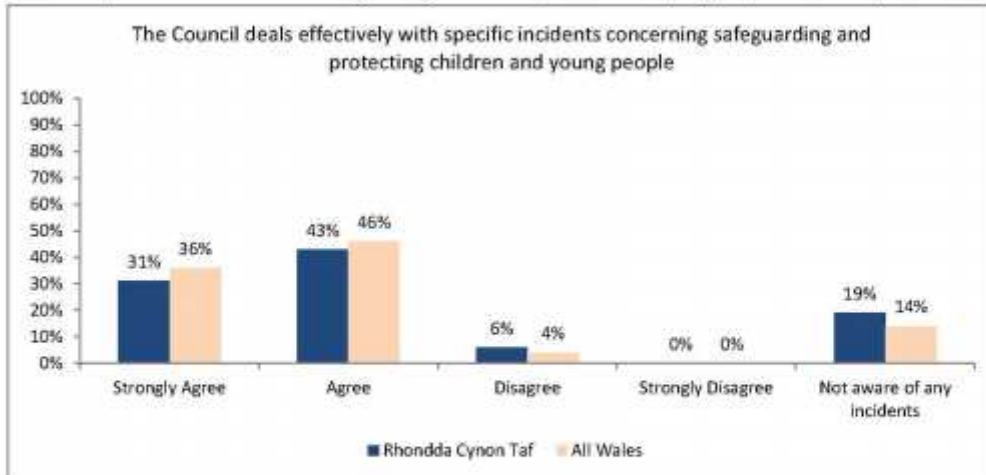
	Total	Not asked	No reply	0-6 months ago	7-12 months ago	1-2 years ago	More than 2 years ago	I cannot remember	I have never received training
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	-	22	23	18	19	5	22
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	4	644	462	374	199	121	192



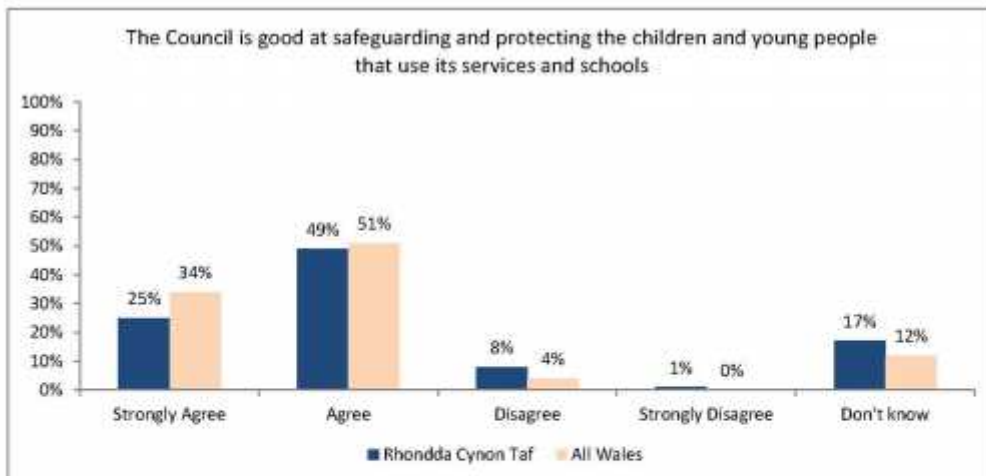
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	1	67	31	5	-	5
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	10	1266	628	27	4	61

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Rhondda Cynon Taf



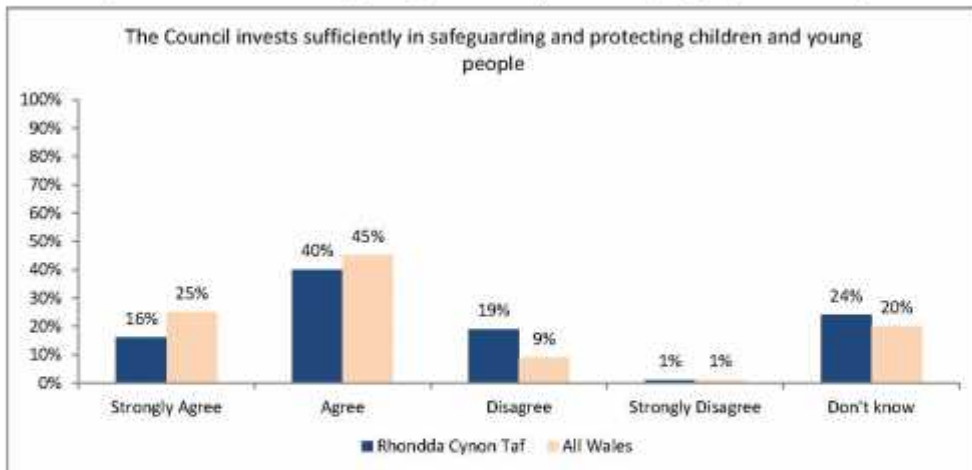
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not aware of any incidents
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	-	34	47	7	-	21
				31%	43%	6%		19%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	11	722	911	76	5	271
				36%	46%	4%	0%	14%



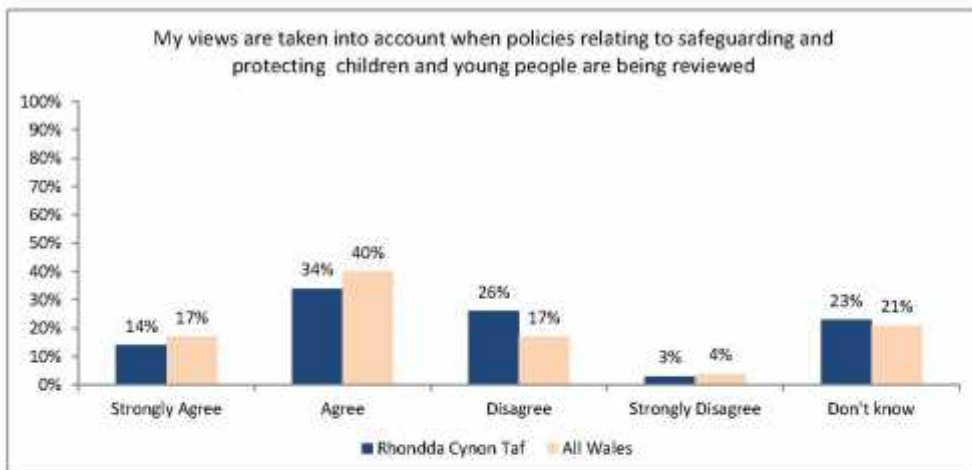
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	2	27	52	9	1	18
				25%	49%	8%	1%	17%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	20	665	1000	74	3	234
				34%	51%	4%	0%	12%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Rhondda Cynon Taf



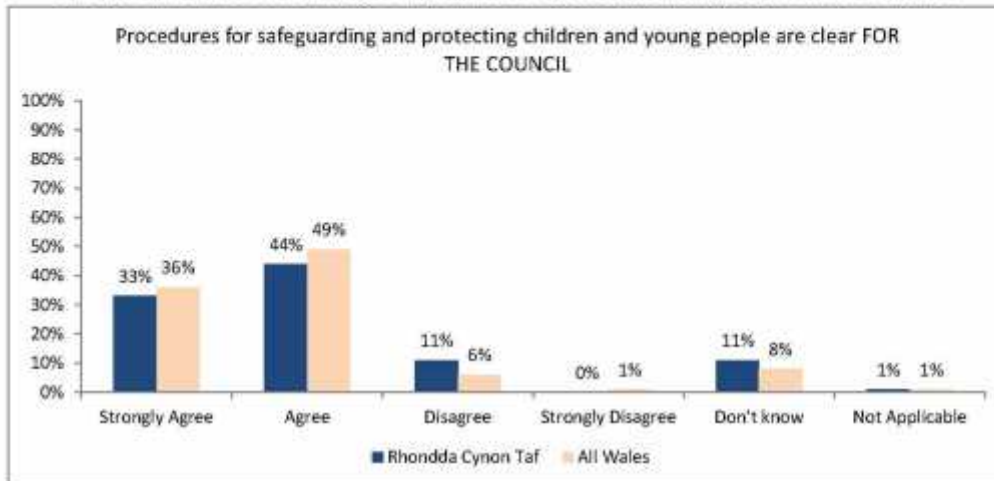
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Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	2	17	43	20	1	26
				16%	40%	19%	1%	24%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	17	491	895	182	19	392
				25%	45%	9%	1%	20%



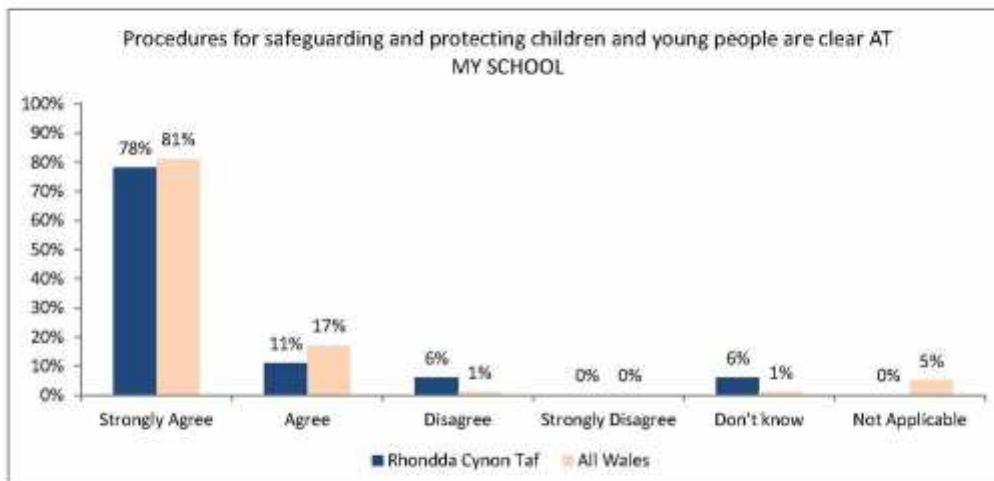
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	1	15	37	28	3	25
				14%	34%	26%	3%	23%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	20	344	794	339	79	420
				17%	40%	17%	4%	21%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Rhondda Cynon Taf



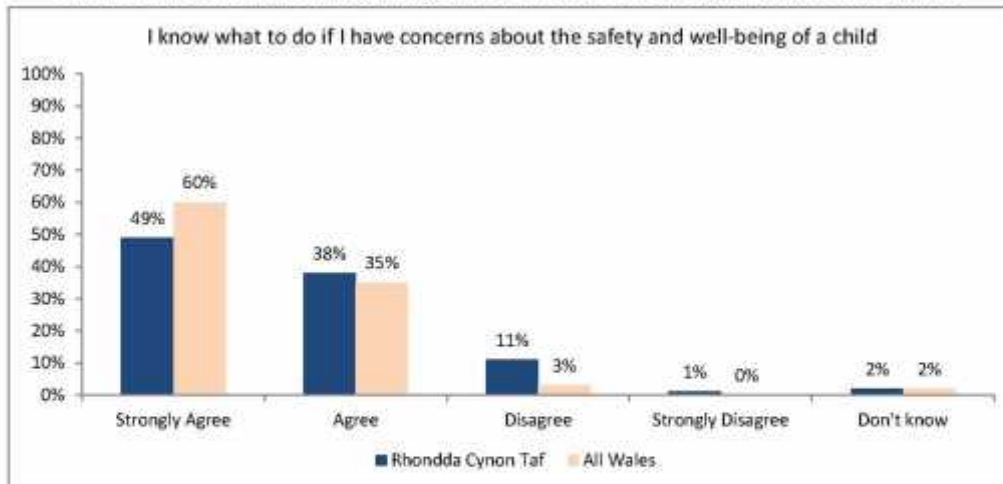
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Not Applicable
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	2	35 33%	47 44%	12 11%	-	12 11%	1 1%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	39	701 36%	942 49%	114 6%	14 1%	160 8%	26 1%



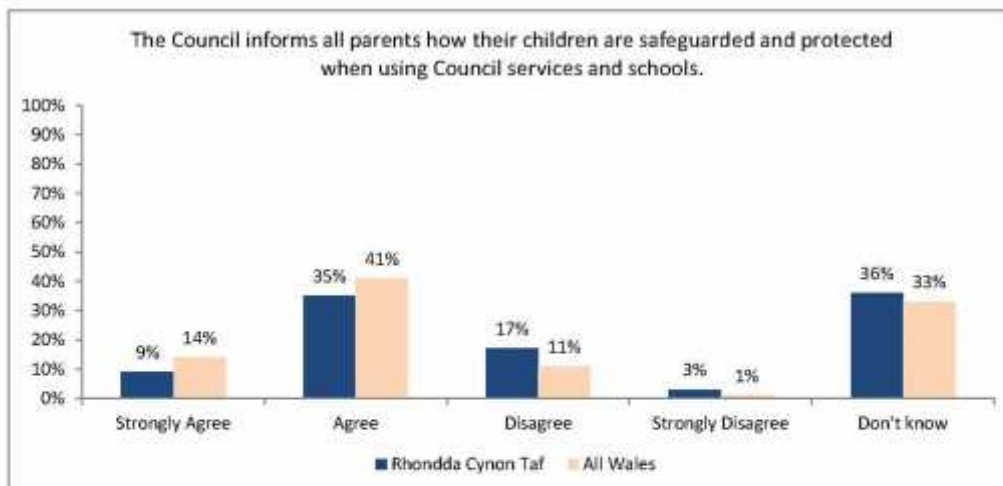
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Not Applicable
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	87	4	14 78%	2 11%	1 6%	-	1 6%	-
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	1399	34	435 81%	92 17%	3 1%	-	5 1%	28 5%

* To make the report easier to read, percentages are shown to nearest whole percentage point. It is therefore possible for the individual figures not to total exactly to 100%.

Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Rhondda Cynon Taf



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	6	50	39	11	1	2
				49%	38%	11%	1%	2%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	29	1174	683	64	8	38
				60%	35%	3%	0%	2%



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Rhondda Cynon Taf Expressed opinion *	109	-	1	10	38	18	3	39
				9%	35%	17%	3%	36%
All Wales Expressed opinion *	1996	-	27	269	816	213	29	642
				14%	41%	11%	1%	33%

* To make the report easier to read, percentages are shown to nearest whole percentage point. It is therefore possible for the individual figures not to total exactly to 100%.

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