

CWM TAF MORGANNWG SAFEGUARDING BOARD

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

28th April 2020 – version 5

INTRODUCTION

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board has produced this strategic response to ensure that safeguarding remains everybody's business whilst our partner agencies and services cope with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board would like to reassure the public and staff that whilst the Board accepts that we are facing a set of unprecedented circumstances, with the depletion of front-line staff due to social distancing and self-isolation, we are working hard to uphold our statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of our most vulnerable, who are now in ever-increasing need of protection. It is vital that the needs of vulnerable children and adults continue to be met and that they are safe during this time.

Clearly, this is a fast moving situation. We recognise that guidance cannot be available to cover every situation, so it is important that Board partner agencies implement their business continuity arrangements in relation to essential services and exercise local judgement in response to local and individual circumstances, within the context of national guidance.

Please be assured that the wellbeing of our front-line staff and the community remains our priority and that the safety of the most vulnerable in our society remains our paramount consideration. The Board would like to commend and support all of those committed staff and volunteers who are working with the most vulnerable and delivering essential services at this time.

Continuing to ensure the Board is well equipped to support its partner agencies and practitioners and perform its statutory duties is a priority, and it is crucial that we work together collaboratively as a regional partnership to ensure that the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk remains at the forefront of our work.

Giovanni Isingrini, Susan Cooper, Lisa Curtis-Jones
Co-Chairs of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board

CRITICAL ROLE OF THE BOARD

We recognise that the impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing of our most vulnerable children and young people may be significant and could result in an increased risk of:

- Abuse and/or Neglect
- Domestic Abuse
- Parental substance misuse
- Illness/Isolation
- Poor mental health
- Poverty

During this difficult and challenging time, the Board will ensure that those most at risk continue to be protected from abuse, neglect and other kinds of harm.

This applies to:

- Children who are subject to new safeguarding concerns
- Section 47 Child Protection enquiries/investigations
- Children whose names are on the Child Protection Register
- Children Looked After
- Children in need of Care and Support who have been identified as most vulnerable
- Adults at risk who are in immediate need of safeguarding support

The Board has a statutory responsibility to ensure that each of its partner agencies has effective measures in place to carry out their critical safeguarding responsibilities and that there is a co-ordinated, regional response to the safeguarding of our most vulnerable people.

HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

The Board will put in place the following measures:

- Establish Silver (regional) and Bronze (local) Command responses to co-ordinating the critical safeguarding activities of our partner agencies (Terms of Reference attached – Appendix 1 and 2)
- Provide weekly reports to Gold Command and the Regional Safeguarding Board on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, highlighting any risks or issues requiring escalation
- Receive guidance from Welsh Government and the National Independent Safeguarding Board to ensure that the statutory duties of the Board are being fulfilled

WHAT ARE THE RISKS THAT WE NEED TO MANAGE?

We will develop a regional risk register to identify and manage any risks to the delivery of critical services in relation to the following key areas:

- The scale and nature of safeguarding reports in relation to children and adults at risk, domestic abuse and suicides
- The use of technology and virtual approaches to manage critical work, including strategy discussions and CP conferences.
- The engagement of families in these processes.
- Visits and investigations, in particular when households and residential establishments are self-isolating.
- Staffing capacity and resources.
- Access to schools, childcare and preventative services.

BOARD PARTNER AGENCIES RESPONSES

Our Partner Agencies have set out their arrangements for overseeing and responding to Child and Adult Safeguarding concerns. This will be subject to ongoing change in line with this dynamic, unprecedented and rapidly evolving situation. A more detailed activity log will be developed to capture daily updates.

CHILDREN SERVICES

All three Local Authority Children Social Care Services in the Region are committed to maintaining critical social care services during the COVID19 emergency. Safeguarding children at risk is a priority service and the three Councils will continue to meet their statutory duties to promote children's well-being and protect them from abuse and neglect, with a focus during this time on meeting their immediate safeguarding needs. The Councils' Children Safeguarding Teams will continue to operate for the duration of the crisis and wherever possible meetings will be completed via skype/teleconferencing.

ADULT SERVICES

All three Local Authority Adult Social Care Services in the Region are committed to maintaining critical social care services during the COVID19 emergency. Safeguarding adults at risk is a priority service and the three Councils will continue to meet their

statutory duties to promote citizens' well-being and protect them from abuse and neglect, with a focus during this time on meeting the immediate safeguarding needs of adults at risk. The Councils' Adult Safeguarding Teams, based within the Bridgend and Cwm Taf Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs, will continue to operate for the duration of the crisis.

EDUCATION

Rhondda Cynon Taf

We are committed to ensuring that safeguarding remains a priority in the face of school closures. We continue to make contact with families with a focus and priority on vulnerable families indicated by CP / CLA or vulnerability profiling data. In RCT, our hub schools model accepts applications for vulnerable children during term-time and Free School Meal provision continues to operate in line with Welsh Government guidance.

Front-line staff involved in the operation of hub schools maintain operational risk assessments in line with the needs of children and young people, the staff and the setting. Where meetings can take place remotely, they are doing so and any staff not required to maintain front-line provision have been, or are in the process of being, set up for home-working including our MASH Education Coordinator.

Merthyr Tydfil

We have established a hub school approach for childcare provision, of which there are seven. Comprehensive guidance has been developed for the operating of these hubs.

School and LA colleagues have put processes in place for the Admission to these hubs, for the delivery of FSMs and for Keeping in Touch with its most vulnerable families/children. Online platforms have been made available in order to continue with the delivery of education. Where a child or young person does not have access to the internet work has been sent to the home. PPE has been delivered for hubs and guidance has been provided on hygiene and social distancing. All provisions have been reminded of the safeguarding processes to follow.

Bridgend

At this critical time, Bridgend Education and Family Support Directorate have been managing the situation with school closures by operating six designated hub schools

for statutory school-aged children of those deemed to be emergency key workers and for some vulnerable families. In each hub there are a number of volunteer teachers from each of the 'feeder' schools and teachers from each child's respective school are designated as the safeguarding lead for that child. The Early Years and Childcare Team have managed to support the childcare arrangements for parents of pre-school infants and children. In addition both of our special schools are providing bespoke support to their most vulnerable pupils.

Schools have identified their most vulnerable children and measures have been put into place to ensure that the families are contacted regularly (at least once/week) by the class teachers/headteacher and this is frequently in conjunction with social workers. In addition we have linked a member of our Vulnerable Groups Team to each hub as a key link for safeguarding queries and issues relating to the support of vulnerable groups of pupils in the hub and also in the community. Online learning platforms provide another opportunity for schools to monitor engagement of vulnerable pupils.

Furthermore, the Directorate has worked to ensure that all children who are eligible for free school meals are catered for. In most cases, families are required to go to their closest collection point (26 schools) ensuring that teachers/headteachers of those schools are able to maintain contact with some of the most vulnerable families. For those who are unable to get to the collection points for various reasons, deliveries are being made to the family home and this has proved to be another useful strategy for the Early Help workers to maintain contact as well. Children on the child protection register are having meals delivered to them daily by Early Help staff which enables them to monitor these children, this information is shared with colleagues in safeguarding.

SOUTH WALES POLICE

As an emergency service, business is being maintained with appropriate risk assessment and mitigation put in place to safeguard the vulnerable and the health and wellbeing of staff. Meetings wherever possible will be undertaken via skype. For any adult/child protection matter an appropriate response will continue which will be fully risk assessed.

Each area of business is putting in place detailed plans and mitigation for maintenance of business, key stake holders are being consulted and reciprocal arrangements are also in place with partners. Where there is a statutory responsibility, these will be adhered to in addition to South Wales Police policies and procedures. Should we be unable to continue with any of our core/statutory responsibilities with mitigations and appropriate measures put in place, the Force Public Protection Department will be consulted for direction and guidance and details shared with the board.

NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE

The National Probation Service has commenced implementation of a range of 'Exceptional Delivery Models' to cover all aspects of our probation delivery where we are unable to continue to deliver services as normal due to staffing levels or service user illness and the need to adhere to Government guidance. The underlying principles of our contingency plans are to prioritise the safety of our staff and service users and to maintain a focus upon public protection and the management of our most dangerous and complex cases. We are also accommodating social distancing guidance into our contingency plans and adopting alternative measures to supervise offenders in the community wherever possible subject to risk assessment. These are;-

- Face-to-face contact will remain for those who have been convicted of acts of terrorism, offenders without a phone and prison leavers reporting for their initial appointment.
- Doorstep visits will be the default option for all other high-risk offenders and medium-risk offenders with domestic abuse or other safeguarding issues. Video and voice calls will be used in addition.
- Lower-risk offenders will now be supervised more frequently, via telephone or video messaging.

All the above measure will be regularly reviewed under a Gold command structure.

CWM TAF MORGANNWG HEALTH BOARD

From March 23rd 2020, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Corporate Safeguarding Team are preparing for ensuring that safeguarding remains everybody's business whilst our services cope with the Covid-19 epidemic. This is a time of

significant uncertainty for colleagues and the public and it is crucial that we work together to ensure that safeguarding and public protection remains at the forefront of our work.

Detailed guidance has been developed that offers practitioners and colleagues from partner agencies a quick guide on how our service will operate over the coming weeks and months. This will be subject to ongoing review and change as we are presented with further information, amendment and clarity on the virus and what we must do to prevent, minimise and mitigate the impact.

OTHER FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD

The Board is required to carry out a number of statutory functions as set out in the Act, but clearly business as usual is not possible at this time as partners are called upon to respond to the urgent and unprecedented demands facing public and voluntary services. We anticipate that this will change as further guidance is provided by the Gold Command, Welsh Government and the National Independent Safeguarding Board. We will review our business critical priorities on a frequent basis, and look to revert to normal practices when it is reasonable and safe to do so. Our current response to these is included in the table below.

FUNCTION	NON-ESSENTIAL TASKS TO TEMPORARILY CEASE	ESSENTIAL TASKS TO CONTINUE
Policies and Procedures	<p>Meetings of the Protocols and Procedures Group</p> <p>Review and development of existing non-essential protocols</p> <p>Implementation of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures – to be delayed until 6th July 2020</p>	<p>Development of new protocols or review of existing protocols that have been identified as essential in supporting the implementation of critical safeguarding functions</p>
Communications and Engagement	<p>Meetings of the Engagement, Participation and Communications Group and agency performance returns.</p>	<p>Communications required to support and enhance critical safeguarding functions during the pandemic</p> <p>Ongoing development of the Board website and social media to ensure that those people who may not be identified as most vulnerable can still access information and support</p>
Joint Review Group	<p>Panel Meetings, Learning Events and MAPFs</p>	<p>Overseeing the PRUDIC process in relation to child deaths</p> <p>Any ongoing work that can be undertaken as part of the review process</p> <p>Initiating the IRG process in response to incidents that are deemed critical, to safeguard individuals and/or the community</p>
Quality Assurance	<p>Meetings of the QA Sub Groups and associated audit work</p>	<p>Performance Management work of the QA Groups and any other activities to support critical functions</p>

Training and Learning	Meetings of the Training and Learning Sub Group and agency performance returns Training events	None – unless identified as a critical need
MASH	None	All critical child protection, adult protection and domestic abuse functions
Child Sexual Exploitation	Meetings of the Cwm Taf MACSE and the Bridgend CSE Task Force	Intelligence sharing and multi-agency response to critical safeguarding activities
Joint Operational Committee and Board		Next meetings to be held in May and June – decision to be made nearer the time

To be reviewed on a weekly basis

KEY CONTACT NUMBERS FOR PARTNER AGENCY SAFEGUARDING LEADS

NAME	AGENCY	EMAIL ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Elizabeth Walton-James	Bridgend CBC	Elizabeth.walton-james@bridgend.gov.uk	07894 306395
Hannah Durham	South Wales Police	Hannah.Durham@south-wales.pnn.police.uk	
Jackie Neale	RCT Adult Safeguarding	Jackie.Neale@rctcbc.gov.uk	07786 523925
Jon Eyre	Merthyr CBC	Jon.Eyre@merthyr.gov.uk	07762 231441
Jon Matthews	National Probation Service	jon.matthews@justice.gov.uk	
Julie Clark	RCT Children Services	julie.clark@rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk	07532 749276
Louise Mann	CTMUHB	Louise.Mann@wales.nhs.uk	07884 052715
Lyndon Lewis	Youth Offending Service	Lyndon.Lewis@rctcbc.gov.uk	07794 884963
Robert Williams	South Wales Police	Robert.Williams@south-wales.pnn.police.uk	07787 276649
Sarah Bowen	Merthyr CBC Education	Sarah.Bowen@merthyr.gov.uk	
Terri Warrilow	Bridgend CBC Adult Services	Terri.warrilow@bridgend.gov.uk	07971 539417
Daniel Williams	RCTCBC Education	Daniel.Williams@rctcbc.gov.uk	07736 488673
Nicola Echanis	Bridgend Education	Nicola.echanis@bridgend.gov.uk	07795 565230

APPENDIX 1

CWM TAF MORGANNWG SILVER COMMAND FOR SAFEGUARDING

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of COVID-19 and the Stay at Home rules are significant in terms of safeguarding the most vulnerable people in the region. Adjustments/closures to services and facilities that support children, families and adults at risk will inevitably result in an increased risk of Abuse and/or Neglect, Domestic Abuse, poor Mental Health and Substance Misuse.

Board partner agencies must uphold their statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of our most vulnerable, who are now in ever-increasing need of protection. A co-ordinated, regional response to safeguarding is vital to ensure that the safeguarding of children and adults at risk continues to be a priority.

2. PURPOSE OF THE SILVER COMMAND

The Silver Command has been set up as the strategic multi-agency group for the following purposes:

- To provide interim governance arrangements for safeguarding during COVID-19, on behalf of the Regional Safeguarding Board
- To oversee, plan and monitor the critical safeguarding priorities of agencies in respect of those who are most at risk.
- To determine priorities and the allocation of resources in relation to safeguarding
- To direct the work of the local Bronze meetings and receive reports from Bronze on a weekly basis on issues for escalation, data and themes
- To report on a weekly basis to Gold Command on the effectiveness of safeguarding across the region

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SILVER COMMAND

Each of the members of the Silver Command will have joint responsibility for ensuring that the following functions are delivered, in line with the overall purpose of the group:

- Ensure that responses to new safeguarding concerns are unaltered and that public and professionals are supported in making reports
- Ensure that information sharing between agencies continues to be effective in safeguarding children and adults at risk

- Consider and resolve any issues or difficulties escalated via the Bronze meetings or raised by individual members of Silver Command
- Receive data from the Bronze meetings in respect of safeguarding reports, engagement with families and attendance at Education hubs and determine suitable responses in accordance with any themes and trends
- Monitor, as appropriate, reports on suicides, via Bronze Command, to identify any emerging themes or trends
- Identify, monitor and manage any risks associated with the delivery of critical safeguarding priorities across the region
- Ensure that staff are supported appropriately, that they are provided with adequate PPE and that their welfare and wellbeing is seen as a priority
- Agree suitable approaches for communications and awareness raising across the region in respect of COVID-19 and the links to safeguarding
- Make the appropriate links to the VAWDASV groups to share information, data and communication activities relating to Domestic Abuse across the region
- Develop any safeguarding guidance or procedures, if deemed appropriate, in response to any identified need
- Monitor the progress of COVID-19 to ensure that safeguarding priorities are responsive to predicted peaks

3. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Chairing

The Silver Command will be chaired by Ann Batley, Service Director for Children in RCT. The Vice Chair will be Laura Kinsey, Head of Children Services, Bridgend

Frequency of Meetings

The group will meet on a weekly basis until such time that this is deemed no longer necessary.

Reporting Arrangements

The Silver Command will provide weekly reports to the Gold Command and to the Regional Safeguarding Board.

Updates to the Welsh Government will be provided via the Board Business Manager.

4. MEMBERSHIP

NAME	ROLE	AGENCY
Ann Batley (Chair)	Service Director for Children	RCT Council
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children Services	Bridgend Council

Annabel Lloyd	Head of Children Services	Merthyr Tydfil Council
Karen Thomas	Superintendent	South Wales Police
Louise Mann	Assistant Director	CTM Health Board
Eirian Evans	Assistant Chief Officer	National Probation Service
Jackie Neale	Service Manager, Adults	RCT Council
Terri Warrilow	Representative for Adult Services	Bridgend Council
Jon Eyre	Representative for Adult Services	Merthyr Tydfil Council
Deb Evans	VAWDASV Representative	Safer Merthyr Tydfil
Nicola Kingham	Business Manager	CTMSB

To be reviewed on a weekly basis

APPENDIX 2

BRONZE COMMAND FOR SAFEGUARDING

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID pandemic and the Stay at Home rules have required a number of adjustments to services that support vulnerable families and adults at risk.

There is particular concern about the impact of these changes for children at risk and their families as services and schools close or reduce their visiting and intervention in the community in order to protect the public and staff.

The safeguarding of children and adults at risk continues to be a priority for partner agencies of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board.

2. PURPOSE OF THE BRONZE COMMAND

Bronze Command meetings have been set up in each of the three local authorities in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region for the following purposes:

- To provide interim operational oversight for safeguarding during COVID-19.
- To receive direction from the Silver Command on priorities and the allocation of resources.
- To ensure that the critical safeguarding priorities of agencies are effective in respect of those who are most at risk.
- Review local safeguarding data and themes/trends in relation to operational activity.
- To identify barriers to the delivery of operational priorities and seek to resolve.
- Report to the Silver Command on a weekly basis on issues for escalation and local safeguarding data and themes/trends in relation to operational activity.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BRONZE COMMAND

Each of the members of the Bronze Command will have joint responsibility for ensuring that the following functions are delivered in line with the overall purpose of the group:

- Ensure that information sharing between agencies continues to be effective in safeguarding children and adults.
- Ensure that agency responses to new safeguarding concerns are unaltered.
- Ensure that agency responses and monitoring of those children / young people and adults already known to be at risk / vulnerable are effective.
- Identify those most at risk and agree actions to reduce risk.
- Reach agreement on the management of risk to children and adults.

- Escalate any risks that cannot be managed locally to Silver Command.
- Adopt a consistent approach in supporting operational staff, including the provision of PPE and supporting their wellbeing.
- Each agency is responsible for coordinating the COVID 19 adjustments in their service in a way that allows them to clearly identify those children, adults or households who are most at risk of harm

In addition to the above, the Bronze Command will identify and agree the information and data that is required to ensure that the safeguarding of children and adults is being monitored on a local basis. This will include:

- Safeguarding reporting
- Engagement with families and adults at risk
- Attendance at Education hubs
- Suicides
- Domestic Abuse

Each agency will provide a weekly report which will cover all of the above.

The agenda of the meeting will include the following:

1. Introductions and apologies
2. Agency Updates
3. High Risk Cases
4. Issues/risk to escalate to Silver Command

To be reviewed on a weekly basis

3. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Frequency of Meetings

The group will meet on a weekly basis until such time that this is deemed no longer necessary. The meeting will be virtual and will be facilitated by the Safeguarding Board Business Unit. Action points will be recorded.

Reporting Arrangements

The Bronze Command will provide weekly reports to the Silver Command. The reports will include the information/data as mentioned above, staffing updates and issues/risks for escalation.

Members wishing to include an item on the agenda or raise a specific family for discussion, will need to forward the relevant information to the Safeguarding Unit's Inbox, to ensure sufficient time for enquiries to be made and for paperwork to be circulated in advance of the meeting.