



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Iechyd, Lles a Llywodraeth Leol  
The Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 29 Ebrill 2010  
Thursday, 29 April 2010**

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cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.  
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Lorraine Barrett	Llafur Labour
Peter Black	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Andrew R.T. Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Irene James	Llafur Labour
David Lloyd	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Val Lloyd	Llafur Labour
Darren Millar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Albert Heaney	Cadeirydd, Bwrdd Diogelu Plant Caerffili Chair, Caerphilly Safeguarding Children Board
Ditectif Uwcharolygydd / Detective Superintendent Pam Kelly	Cynrychiolydd heddluoedd Cymru Representative of Welsh police forces
Marie Lebacqz	Prif Swyddog, Bwrdd Diogelu Plant Wrecsam Chief Officer, Wrexham Safeguarding Children Board
Zarah Newman	Cydlynnydd, Bwrdd Diogelu Plant Caerffili Coordinator, Caerphilly Safeguarding Children Board
Anthony Richards	Prif Swyddog Cynorthwyol, Ymddiriedolaeth Prawf Cymru Assistant Chief Officer, Wales Probation Trust
Liz Rijnenberg	Cyfarwyddwr Darparu Lleol dros dro, Ymddiriedolaeth Prawf Cymru Interim Director of Local Delivery, Wales Probation Trust

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol**  
**National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Sarita Marshall	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Sian Thomas	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 12.50 p.m.*  
*The meeting began at 12.50 p.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon**  
**Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Darren Millar:** I welcome Members to this afternoon's meeting of the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee. I also welcome members of the public, and

remind them that headsets are available for simultaneous translation and sound amplification in the public gallery; the ushers will be able to provide assistance if anyone has any problems in using these. Committee members and members of the public may wish to note that the simultaneous translation feed is available on channel 1, while channel 0 has the original language that is spoken.

[2] I would be grateful if everyone could ensure that all mobile phones, BlackBerrys and pagers are switched off so that they do not interfere with the broadcasting, and other, equipment. If it is necessary to evacuate the room or the public gallery in the event of an emergency, then everyone should follow the instructions of the ushers, who will be able to guide you to an appropriate exit. I will remind witnesses when they arrive about the use of the microphones.

[3] I have received apologies from Helen Mary Jones and Ann Jones, and I am aware that Irene James and Andrew R.T. Davies will need to leave early. I am advised that Val will be arriving shortly, and I expect that Irene will also arrive soon. Before the witnesses come in, I ask Members to make any declarations of interest under Standing Order No. 31.6. I see that there are none.

12.51 p.m.

**Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor i Fyrddau Lleol Diogelu Plant—Tystiolaeth gan Fwrdd  
Diogelu Plant Caerffili  
Committee Inquiry into Local Safeguarding Children Boards—Evidence from  
Caerphilly Safeguarding Children Board**

[4] **Darren Millar:** I am delighted to welcome Albert Heaney, chair of Caerphilly Safeguarding Children Board, and Zarah Newman, who is the board's co-ordinator. Thank you for the papers that you have provided. If you are content, we will go straight to questions on those papers.

[5] The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales review found that, while some local children safeguarding boards had made significant progress, many remained at different stages of development, with only limited progress being made by a small number of boards in Wales. Is this an accurate analysis of the position across the country today, or have there been further improvements since the CSSIW review?

[6] **Mr Heaney:** I take it that the microphone is on?

[7] **Darren Millar:** Yes; it is operated automatically, so you do not have to press any buttons.

[8] **Mr Heaney:** Thank you for inviting Caerphilly Safeguarding Children Board to the committee today. The inspection report was especially helpful to us in Wales; it provided an overarching picture of how we were placed in terms of safeguarding-board responsibilities across the nation. In terms of whether that is the same picture today, you will be well aware, from some of the submissions that are coming through, that the evidence suggests that all safeguarding boards are making progress. We have made a number of key steps. I will use Caerphilly's board—a multi-agency statutory board with key partners—as an example. We were found to be in a good position by the inspectorate. We had made good progress, but there were areas that we had to improve further. There were a number of key themes: one was on integrating with, and linking across, the adult protection world and another was on how we linked with all of the multi-agency protection arrangements for public offenders and so on. We have started to strengthen those areas and have built on them. So, using the inspection

reports we have started to build on the practice. My belief, as chair, from the conversations that I have had with colleagues and fellow chairs around the nation, is that there has been significant progress and that this remains to be the case.

[9] It is probably worth reflecting on the fact that we had to make a significant journey from where area child protection committees were positioned. With no disrespect intended, they often involved more junior staff who could not make serious and important decisions. The new safeguarding-board arrangements have been elevated; for example, in Caerphilly the director of social services chairs the board—we previously had the chief executive of the local health board as the vice chair, and we currently have the locality director—and the director of education is also a member. We have a number of players from different agencies who are working together and are committed to partnership progress.

[10] **Lorraine Barrett:** The scope of safeguarding boards is much wider than that of the former area child protection committees, and now includes all children and young people and all forms of harm. Has this created any long-term major challenges for Caerphilly's board?

[11] **Mr Heaney:** When Caerphilly established its safeguarding board, it was quite clear at the outset that it had to retain its focus on child protection arrangements while moving into the wider safeguarding board functions around children in need and other vulnerable groups. So, we were clear at the outset that we had to keep our eye on the central ball, namely child protection, while developing into wider safeguarding arrangements.

[12] Over the last three or four years, that scope has opened up new avenues of partnership working in developing more preventative strategies. It is these that we are keen to explore further. These will take us into arrangements on how we work, not just as a safeguarding board, but how we establish local links, which we have done, with the children and young people's partnership, ensuring that their key functions around the core aims and the Assembly Government's core aims are fulfilled—core aim 3, for example, which relates to safeguarding responsibilities in health, and core aim 6, which relates to family support and prevention strategies.

[13] **Lorraine Barrett:** Has there been extra pressure on resources because of the wider scope?

[14] **Mr Heaney:** I would not say that there is extra pressure on resources. The pressure has been felt in relation to ensuring that our strategic plan is aligned to the priorities of the local community and ensuring that our management information and delivery achieves those goals. As to the question of whether we need additional resources, of course, as you move into wider safeguarding arrangements, it opens up new avenues and I am sure that the funding arrangements for safeguarding boards will be a question that we come to later.

[15] The safeguarding board itself has no additional funding that it can manage directly. It will rely on the additionality that is met by partner agencies working together. So, it is about prioritisation and how we deliver smarter outcomes for children and young people.

[16] **Peter Black:** The CSSIW's local safeguarding children review report found that not all front-line practitioners were aware of LSCBs and what they did in their area. Is this the case in Caerphilly? If not, how have you ensured widespread awareness of the LSCB and its role?

[17] **Mr Heaney:** That is a good question. The first thing that the agencies working together on the Caerphilly safeguarding board agreed on as a commitment, or a vision, was that we were about strategic direction, strategies, implementation and achieving outcomes, but we were fundamentally about improving practice. So, we have sought to set out

mechanisms on ways of achieving that. I will give you a few examples of really good practice that is at the cutting edge.

[18] We have established regular—every four to six weeks—multi-agency practitioner fora. The safeguarding board is made up of multi-agency partners; we co-ordinate this, we organise it and we run those on key themes. Examples would include messages and lessons learned from serious case reviews; and the guidance in relation to child trafficking. So, the board has been getting its message out directly. We have websites and we release other information. I will hand over to Zarah in a moment, as she will be able to talk you through some of that work.

[19] Alongside that work, we have something that I consider to be crucial in developing smarter practice. So, it is not just about being aware that the local safeguarding children board exists, it is about understanding its priorities. For example, where there are cases of concern, which may not be cases that would fall immediately into child protection, but may be cases that professionals are worried about, we have established a supervision model where multi-agency teams can come together to explore the complexities of that case to ensure that we deliver more effective services and more effective practice to safeguard children and young people.

[20] **Ms Newman:** I will expand on that. We felt early on that there was a need to translate the strategic into improvements at the front line. The practitioner fora have been running for around 14 or 15 months. They last for around two hours, so they are bite-sized sessions that cover particular aspects of safeguarding. However, they also exist to promote and enhance the existing working relationships that we have. We also have a programme to raise awareness, among the wider children's workforce, such as voluntary and community groups, and the faith sectors. We have undertaken a rolling programme, through which we go out to these groups to raise awareness about the board and its work, and safeguarding in a general sense. This has led to their attending our multi-agency training and coming to the practitioner fora. So, we are generating quite significant interest in the board and its work. In all the promotional work and training that we do, we highlight the website for protocols practice guidance, for more information about the board and how people can get involved. So, we are getting out there to reach practitioners and to raise the profile of the board.

1.00 p.m.

[21] **Peter Black:** As an elected Member, the only time that the local safeguarding children board appears on my radar is when you have a serious case review. You then have a lot of comments about the access to the review and the fact that it is your property and not public and so on. How do you get around that, because the only time that the public is aware of you is when you have a serious case review, and it is often critical of what has gone on? It is not always critical, of course. To whom are you accountable and how are you scrutinised in what you do?

[22] **Mr Heaney:** That is a crucial question that operates on a number of levels and I hope that I can take a bit of time to explore some of the layers to that.

[23] We are accountable to the public. We have to deliver more effective, responsive and timely services. We have seen in the inspection report that multi-agency working is much more progressive at the front door. What I mean by that is the referral stage of the child protection match for a child concerned. What we have done locally is to publicise; we have a lot of communication. We have used our local news line that goes out to all residents in the borough to promote safeguarding arrangements. By working with children and young people, we have developed a range of information tools that are disseminated through education and other areas so that we promote the message. We have developed a user-friendly website to

make sure that people can access our service. It is interesting, because I was always a little sceptical about how many people use websites, but I am finding more and more that the public is using websites. So, it is about new tool and technology developments. So, we are co-ordinating the public communication of central messages and key themes. We co-ordinate it by having a sub-group of the main board that reports regularly to the board for the executive decisions around promotion and communications. So, we have taken on board the legislation that says that we have a duty to promote and communicate, and we have a sub-group that specifically focuses on that level of communication.

[24] As an authority within the borough, we also report to our elected members. We take regular reports to our health, social care and wellbeing scrutiny committee. We also brief our executive member in local government on safeguarding issues. Indeed, I meet with the elected member on a one-to-one basis every fortnight. They also attend my safeguarding senior management team discussions. So, we have a layer there of local elected membership where we are out publicising discussion and being scrutinised on whether or not we are performing. In the Caerphilly area, we have sought to place ourselves within the structure of the local service board. You will be aware that we piloted local service boards a few years ago, and they are now across the whole of Wales. Within Caerphilly, the local service board has the most senior representatives representing their agencies. We report on two things to the board: we report on our performance, so, as a chair, I am held to account in terms of performance; we also report on any issues that emerge that may hinder safeguarding or any practice that we need to develop. So, we have a clear line of accountability. Although we are a statutory body in our own right, we felt that it was right, as a board, to also report to the local service board, so that enhances our accountability and responsibility. I hope that we will be able to tell you later about how we have consulted children and young people and also fed back to them, and built some of their concerns around what needs to happen around safeguarding into our strategic plans.

[25] **Darren Millar:** Irene James will look in more detail at your membership and representation.

[26] **Irene James:** Good afternoon to you both. Do you support the recommendation of the Welsh Government's local safeguarding children review group report that regulations should be strengthened to include LSCB membership from agencies other than those named in the Children Act 2004, such as adult social services and, dare I say, further education colleges, because they are often linked quite closely?

[27] **Mr Heaney:** I am reasonably relaxed about the legislation guidance on membership. It could be strengthened and I would not have any problems with that, if you should decide to strengthen it. We need to review the membership because of some of the regional changes with health and some of the national changes with probation. So, now is the time to review the constitution of the membership. For example, in Caerphilly a representative of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service has always been a regular member of the board.

[28] Interestingly, in response to your question, we have developed over the years. Our membership was initially defined in accordance with the legislation, but we have broadened it. The assistant director for adult services is a member of the board, which is an essential role, because when you look at safeguarding across children and adult services, you see that it is crucial that those two worlds work together. We have also strengthened the membership by making the assistant director of the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations a member of our board. The organisation had been linked previously at a sub-group level, but we elevated it to board membership.

[29] Local determination is helpful to be able to bring in the players that are crucial to

safeguarding. What we have done and achieved as Caerphilly safeguarding board is to ensure that those significant players are around the table. One level is involved in the board, but we have a wider structure and a number of players, such as further education colleges, can also be embedded in our work through the sub-group culture. One of our worries and tensions, given Loughborough University's research and our knowledge of Ofsted's review of the serious case reviews on safeguarding in England, is that too many people around the table can sometimes be restrictive. An ideal board probably has 20 to 25 core members at a senior level and it is important that safeguarding boards retain that level of seniority. That is what makes the difference when I go back into my workplace: I am a champion for safeguarding and I am able to influence the key issues that need to be considered corporately and politically.

[30] **Irene James:** You have pre-empted my next question, which was going to mention GAVO. Do you think that this has been effective in ensuring communication with voluntary groups?

[31] **Mr Heaney:** There are a couple of layers involved. Having the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations as a core member and involved in the sub-group structure enhances our ability to deliver. It enhances the safeguarding agenda because a lot of voluntary organisations working out there are in regular contact with children, young people and families, so they are at the heart of community safety. Being part of that board is essential to me, and as the chair of the board, I think that it is a valuable contribution. If we look at the lessons learned from the Bichard inquiry into the Soham case, because of which changes in legislation were required and we have the new independent safeguarding authority coming online, we see that lots of voluntary organisations and other groups are involved in safeguarding, so it is crucial that they are part of the round-table discussion.

[32] **Irene James:** They are the core of our communities, are they not?

[33] **Mr Heaney:** Yes, and they are represented on our safeguarding board for that very reason.

[34] **Ms Newman:** Due to GAVO's involvement in the sub-group structure and the board, it has been influential in raising the profile of the board with voluntary community groups and in raising our awareness of what projects are in existence out there, so that we can reach out to them and involve them in our work.

[35] **Darren Millar:** I ask Members and witnesses to be brief in their questions and answers, because we are working against the clock today. We have a lot of business to get through and lots of questions and evidence that we want to put on the record.

[36] **David Lloyd:** I am suitably chided in advance. In your excellent paper, you mention that:

[37] 'Regional services such as Health and the Police find maintaining senior representation challenging due to the sheer number of partnerships within local authority areas.'

[38] Do you want to briefly expand on that and share any concerns that you have about any fallout from the latest NHS reorganisation following that theme?

[39] **Mr Heaney:** On the first part of the question, there is an important decision to be made. We have local safeguarding children boards and the question may be being asked, quite rightly, whether we should have regional safeguarding children boards.

1.10 p.m.

[40] We have important players, significant partners, in the field of health and in the police, who are now regionally based. The position that we hold in Caerphilly, as a safeguarding board, is that we would want to continue as a safeguarding board. However, we have sought to develop, where appropriate, some really strong regional working, across safeguarding boards. In the Gwent area, we are now delivering a great deal of work relating to our policies and protocols. These are being developed across the Gwent area. We are also delivering training and workforce development across the area, and we are looking at serious case reviews across the area.

[41] Retaining our status as a safeguarding board has enabled the vice-chair and me to co-ordinate our efforts with other partnerships within the locality. Our strategic plan is only one part of community planning and community safety. We have sought to move progressively into arrangements. You will have seen in the written submission that we have developed development days across the partnerships. That has opened people's eyes about the workforce, the streaming and the sub-group structures that we have. We are becoming more streamlined locally, agreeing our priorities and then delivering on those. We have three priorities that have emerged across those partnerships. We now have a system of meetings between chairs and vice-chairs to ensure that we, as chairs, are exercising our accountability, not just to our partnerships, but to partnership working. By doing that, we are reducing the number of meetings that are being held, but delivering outcomes. From our point of view, there has to be a careful balance. If we go too far one way, we may lose something that is enabling us to deliver enhanced community planning at a local level.

[42] **David Lloyd:** On the back of that, I would like to ask a question specifically on partnerships. You say in your paper that there is a need for clear guidance on the relationships between local safeguarding children boards and other strategic partnerships, in particular children and young people's partnerships. What sort of challenges do you face there?

[43] **Mr Heaney:** The significant issue here relates to our recommendation that the guidance and documents that will state what should be in our plans have a cross-cutting effect, not a fragmented effect. That is the crucial agenda that we would want this committee to consider, ensuring that when we have new legislation and new guidance it will say that partnerships must work together and must deliver effective health, social care and wellbeing across a wide area. That is where we are coming from.

[44] I will now go back to a question that I did not answer, in case it gets picked up later. You mentioned restructuring. It is really important that the committee is aware that restructuring has an effect. When you go regional, it has an effect. It is not that I am against working regionally because we are involved in a number of projects in Caerphilly relating to children's placements, the frailty programme is at the heart of what we are involved in across Gwent, and there is a whole host of issues that we are committed to and believe in. However, when you have a new structure, it takes time. It is fair to say that, with the structural changes, it has taken time for those new structures to become embedded. Once that settles down, we will move forward. There is an impact issue in the short term.

[45] **Peter Black:** I wish to go back to the issue of the representation of health professionals at a senior level on the board. A number of the summaries of serious case reviews that I have seen have referred to communication issues relating to health and to the police that have led to a communication breakdown. Is that reflected in the fact that you cannot always get senior representation? Is it the case that not all parties are learning lessons from these serious case reviews and addressing issues that arise from them?

[46] **Mr Heaney:** Our Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales inspection report highlighted that we needed to be aware of risks related to the transition period. We have

found that we have had a change in personnel, but that the seniority of the position has not been weakened. In terms of Caerphilly's current position, we have the locality director for the new Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board, which is the most senior position in the locality, and we also have a very experienced police officer, a detective inspector. I apologise: he is a superintendent. Strike that from the Record; I take it back. We have a senior police official who is extremely knowledgeable. His detailed knowledge of child protection and safeguarding is second to none. We feel confident about the strength that we have. We, as a board, have had to navigate through the period of transition, but we have come out of it. It is fair to say that I am representing the board today, but I am well aware of the fact that, if my police colleague were here today, he would say that they have to play this out five times. It takes us back to the debate that I was introducing, in that there is a cost regardless of which direction we choose to take, and it is important that we do not lose the community planning process within localities.

[47] **Peter Black:** Are those representatives senior enough to drive forward changes that might come up in serious case reviews, even within their own organisations?

[48] **Mr Heaney:** Yes.

[49] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you for your paper, which was very informative. The questions that I would like to put to you are related to finance. If I had a pound for everyone who came before the Assembly to say that money was short for them or that they had been starved of cash, I would probably have a happy retirement. However, I understand that it is a big issue. I would be grateful if you could elaborate on the need to get your finances sorted. In your paper and in the report from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, I think that a figure of about £100,000 is used as the optimum amount for ensuring that a safeguarding board can function properly. I appreciate that you are coming from Caerphilly's perspective, but you must talk to partners, so could you give me a feel for how many safeguarding boards are hitting that target of £100,000? If they are failing to do so, what do we need to do to get the balance of financing and resourcing right, so that we get optimal performance from the safeguarding boards?

[50] **Mr Heaney:** The committee may be aware that I am a joint lead director of the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru. Parry Davies and I take a lead role across the nation, and we have been heavily involved in co-ordinating responses to the safeguarding inspections. From our experience, the funding issue is crucial. You were right about what you said about having a pound for everyone who comes in asking for money. As partners in Caerphilly, we have said that we need secure funding. I have an excellent business manager who works tirelessly to move forward the partnership of the board. There is no secure funding for that post. At present, we have some funding that comes from partners, which is valued and appreciated. As a chair, I believe firmly that we should regulate the funding arrangements. I would ask the Welsh Assembly Government and the National Assembly to consider this, because it is only a small amount of funding. We are all into prioritising funding, improving efficiencies, and delivering better, and we know that they are crucial in our local communities, but the safeguarding inspection found that those boards that had a business manager progressed faster than those that did not. The regionalisation of approach takes us into discussions, and so we have helpful and open discussions with partners about how they can contribute—and that is five times, in Caerphilly's experience. I understand that Wrexham's local safeguarding children board will be presenting to you this afternoon, and that it is engaged in support. There are six local authorities in that area that are able to cover for the police and health.

[51] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You point out Zara's role as your business manager. As the report identifies, is it because some of the boards do not have the optimum £100,000 or above that they are unable to appoint a business manager who could facilitate greater dialogue on a

regional basis. The other thing that the report identifies on funding is that an ‘effective formula’, which is the wording used, has not been found for the NHS and the police to contribute to your funding streams.

[52] **Mr Heaney:** The crucial thing is to go back to the legislation, which says ‘may’ contribute. That goes to the heart of the matter. In some areas, partners have contributed. We get a contribution of around £50,000. So, the majority is either contributed by the local authority, as the ministry that runs the board, or in kind by the partners who run the process.

1.20 p.m.

[53] I believe strongly that, for a relatively small amount of money, you could establish core minimum requirements for all boards that would enable them to operate more effectively. That funding structure takes away from what my request would be as a chair, namely to move us from ‘may’ contribute to ‘will’ contribute, or for the Welsh Assembly Government to fund the core element directly. That would be my—

[54] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, to address the funding imbalance, two things are required. First, WAG has to put a bit more in, which might be difficult, given its budget. Secondly, the other fundamental that might change this quite dramatically would be to drop the word ‘may’ from the legislation. That sounds simple enough, but is quite complicated to revisit a piece of legislation to change it. However, that would fundamentally change the balance in favour of a more stable funding formula.

[55] **Mr Heaney:** Fundamentally, I believe that we have to change the balance. We have to be champions of safeguarding arrangements, and to do that we have to ensure that the funding arrangements are secure for the safeguarding boards.

[56] **David Lloyd:** As regards vulnerable groups in particular, the written evidence from your colleagues in Wrexham says that an all-Wales approach is needed to support local safeguarding children boards to be more effective in protecting vulnerable children. They suggest that that could be achieved by introducing a consultant role or having a beacon local safeguarding children board to support other boards, if and when they need advice on particular specialised issues, such as trafficked children, which you mentioned at the start. How useful would that approach be, would you say?

[57] **Ms Newman:** From a local perspective, as we were developing as a board, we had lots of discussions about our shared understanding of safeguarding vulnerable groups. I agree about the prevalence of particular issues such as trafficking, which might be less of a problem in our borough than in others. We have a programme of awareness raising on that, but a consultant would be able to advise and guide LSCBs on some of those issues, which would be valuable.

[58] **Darren Millar:** Val Lloyd has the next question.

[59] **Val Lloyd:** I apologise for being unavoidably delayed, but I have read your paper. I want to ask about information sharing. I noticed that you outlined in your evidence the significant work that you have done in that arena, but that the safeguarding review group recommended that the Welsh Government consult on revised guidance on the information-sharing responsibilities and duties of the partner agencies. Do you have a view on that?

[60] **Mr Heaney:** Yes, I support that fully. At a local level, we are well aware that we are sharing information on the safeguarding issues that emerge. That is reflected in some of the local protocols, but we are well aware that the Wales accord for sharing personal information has been signed up to by most players, though not all. However, national agreed information

sharing is crucial.

[61] The other element that I would introduce into this conversation is that we also need to develop what I would term ‘connectivity’. If we are talking about information sharing, we need also to think through how our information technology is developing. We need to be able to access information on a timely basis, and at the moment some of our IT systems are stand-alone systems. Over the next generation, we should be moving towards integrating our information technology to allow us to share information and have the right information in the right place at the right time.

[62] **Darren Millar:** Andrew, you have a short supplementary question on that.

[63] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is relevant. A number of times, I have visited the Minister’s office to be briefed on a serious case review and found that one partner had the information but the others in the chain had not. If the information was not available to someone, there might be a reason why action was not taken. When information has just not been shared, that sounds like a basic communication failure.

[64] Moving on to the serious case reviews, there has been a massive increase in their cost. I say that because you are having to do the work that the organisation should initially have been doing to see where everyone sits within the framework of looking after someone—or are there other underlying reasons why the costs of senior case reviews have gone up so dramatically in recent years?

[65] **Mr Heaney:** I am well aware of the fact that serious cases have been under review, and I know that the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales has taken forward work on your behalf. There are many layers to that question. One is that the cost of serious case reviews has increased because their scope has changed. So, the legislation and the guidance on working together have shifted the criteria and the band of when serious case reviews should be held, which has led to an increased prevalence.

[66] Another thing that has shifted serious case reviews, from my experience as a chair, and as someone who has written overview reports and management reviews independently, is integrity. The reports have to be able to stand that test and must be a true reflection. Boards such as ours do not have core funding to fund serious case reviews; our partners fund them. We have—rightly, in my opinion—sought independent overview authors, so we bring in specialists, which comes at a price. So, as the numbers and the resourcing across Wales have increased, we have started to link the serious case review process locally, because we want to prevent those recurring messages and themes.

[67] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Are you saying that the intensity of the reviews has added to the cost or the proportion of the cost increase? If I understand what you are saying, the reviews are now far more intense in what they delve into, so they can stand up to robust scrutiny, as you rightly pointed out, and can provide solutions.

[68] **Mr Heaney:** You are right about the intensity of the serious case reviews. One could argue that that has always been there, but serious case reviews are now extremely media sensitive and public, given the feelings and emotions that they generate. We know that the public is tired of hearing the same phraseology, such as ‘We have learned the lessons’. They want to see delivery and improved practice, which is why we, at a local level, have sought to disseminate messages to our practitioners across all agencies and developed an integrated multi-agency practitioners’ forum. We have also developed links across the wider Gwent community to discuss how we share and manage the serious case reviews. So, we are trying to reduce some of the costs by streamlining and being more effective. So, we have looked to collaborate both ways: locally, to deliver through good practice, and regionally, to achieve

and maximise our resources.

[69] **Peter Black:** Although the outcome of serious case reviews is public, the reviews themselves remain private and are the property of the board. They are not published, apart from the summary. That raises an issue of how they are scrutinised. Another issue on the costs is the length of time that it takes to carry out a serious case review. By the time the independent reviewer reports and the summary becomes public, it can be two, three or four years after the death of the child in question. How would you address those two issues if you were carrying out the review that the Assembly Government is carrying out?

[70] **Mr Heaney:** I would first recommend following the suggestions outlined in Wendy Rose's independent CSSIW report. There was a working group working on that. The report talks about layering serious case reviews and the management of processes, which would be a helpful way forward.

[71] The time factor probably frustrates me, as a chair, as much as it frustrates you. I am sometimes at the mercy of other factors that I cannot control, such as criminal proceedings, which mean that we cannot proceed, and the Wrexham local safeguarding children board makes reference in its submission to waiting for coroners, post-mortems and toxicology reports. We have certainly experienced delays because of an interface between systems that are outside the normal domain of the serious case review or the safeguarding board.

1.30 p.m.

[72] Following a recent experience, we asked for legislation or guidance to compel others to comply when we are involved in the said processes. I hope that that answers some of your questions. I would be happy to take any follow-up questions if I have not covered everything that you wanted me to.

[73] **Darren Millar:** Thank you for that. The clock has almost beaten us, so I will just ask one final, very brief question. You referred in your opening remarks earlier to the involvement of young people with the board and, in your written evidence, you talk about the youth forum in Caerphilly and your engagement with looked-after children. You also referred to practice elsewhere in Wales, where a shadow or junior board has been established. Do you think that there should be statutory guidance on the involvement and engagement of young people? If so, what ideas do you have? You have around 30 seconds in which to answer, sorry.

[74] **Ms Newman:** Okay—no pressure, then. [*Laughter.*] We are learning, and we do share quite a lot of information and practice across local safeguarding children board areas. We have learned from the models in Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, for example, with junior LSCBs. Our approach has been multifaceted: we have annual consultation events for children and young people, but we also try to engage with school councils; we developed some leaflets for children and young people about attending child protection conferences and contributing to their own assessments, but we took them to the youth forum first to ask about the language and terminology that we use. So, we consult on a kind of rolling programme.

[75] On statutory guidance—and this may go back to the resourcing issue—it might be helpful to stress that it should not be done in a tokenistic way. Engagement with children and young people must be meaningful, and it therefore needs to be resourced with skilled and knowledgeable people, so that having a junior LSCB is not just for the sake of it. It might be helpful to have some guidance on how we could pursue ways of engaging.

[76] **Darren Millar:** Do you think that you could engage on a more regional basis to feed into the local partner or board?

[77] **Mr Heaney:** Certainly. I would support that, as it would be very helpful. We held events very early on to talk to young people and children about what we are safeguarding and what it meant to them and their area. They talked about safeguarding technology, their home and school. We then used their information and built that into our strategic priorities and plan, and we fed that back to them. So, it was not tokenistic; it was integrated in a meaningful way. When we got feedback from the young people and children, they told us that they valued that enormously. Their contributions to safeguarding can tell us information that we, as professionals, would not want to miss out on.

[78] **Ms Newman:** Locally, we are also trying to work across partnerships so that we are consulting with children and young people on a range of cross-cutting issues.

[79] **Darren Millar:** Thank you for that. That brings us to the end of this session. I thank you, Albert Heaney and Zarah Newman, for your attendance. If you think of any other issues that you wished you had raised with us, please do not hesitate to send us some more information.

[80] **Mr Heaney:** Thank you very much for your time and for inviting us.

1.34 p.m.

**Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor i Fyrddau Lleol Diogelu Plant—Tystiolaeth gan Fwrdd  
Diogelu Plant Wrecsam  
Committee Inquiry into Local Safeguarding Children Boards—Evidence from  
Wrexham Safeguarding Children Board**

[81] **Darren Millar:** We now continue with our evidence gathering on local safeguarding children boards. You will have to forgive me if I pronounce your surname incorrectly, but I am delighted to welcome Marie Lebacqz.

[82] **Ms Lebacqz:** That is correct.

[83] **Darren Millar:** I am led to believe that you are the chief officer of the Wrexham local safeguarding children board.

[84] **Ms Lebacqz:** I am the chief safeguarding support officer for the local authority, but I am also a member of the local safeguarding children board. It is currently chaired by our director of children's services, Clare Field.

[85] **Darren Millar:** We are very grateful for the written evidence that you have sent, and we are grateful for your attendance here today. I know the journey from north to south Wales only too well, and I know that it can take its toll.

[86] I will move straight to the questions, if that is okay. You refer to the fact that one of the findings of the CSSIW review report into safeguarding children boards suggested that there is an overreliance on local authority social services, to the detriment of some of the other partners at the table. Do you think that that is still the case, or have things moved on since the report was published?

[87] **Ms Lebacqz:** First of all, I thank you for inviting me to give evidence. It is a privilege. Things have begun to move on since the findings of the inspection. However, there is still room for further improvement. On Wrexham's local safeguarding children board, we have been working hard to develop means of reporting performance in the safeguarding arena

across agencies. The bulk of reporting on performance in relation to safeguarding is currently still focused on children's social care.

[88] **Darren Millar:** So, things have moved on. Do you think that there is a need for guidance to move things further down the track? You did not sound confident in your response that all the progress that is needed had been made.

[89] **Ms Lebacqz:** It would be helpful to have further guidance on what might be considered to be joint performance indicators. The benefit of that would be that we could gain a national picture of the effectiveness of safeguarding across Wales, because we could compare the data across different areas. If each local safeguarding children board reaches an agreement about shared indicators across its member agencies, the parameters will be slightly different, and so it is more difficult to get a national picture.

[90] **Darren Millar:** It is not often that we get people asking for more indicators that have to be reported back to the Assembly Government, but I can understand that that might be necessary when you have joint arrangements in place.

[91] **Ms Lebacqz:** It might be about substituting some of the existing ones, rather than having more in total.

[92] **Darren Millar:** Excellent. You could substitute some of the more meaningless ones. We will move on. Lorraine Barrett has the next question.

[93] **Lorraine Barrett:** In your paper, you say that the scope of the safeguarding children boards' responsibilities supports the breadth of the safeguarding agenda. However, you also state that it needs to be modified and properly resourced, as

[94] 'there is a need to ensure that we do not allow safeguarding and child protection to become synonymous'.

[95] Can you expand on that a little, please?

[96] **Ms Lebacqz:** Yes. As Members will be aware, the local safeguarding children boards moved on from the old area child protection committees, which were designed solely to deal with child protection. There is a recognition, from many years of research, that safeguarding is broader than that. At the inception of the Wrexham safeguarding board, our approach was to start by saying that our core business was child protection and that we were gradually going to expand our work into broader safeguarding on an incremental basis. We would therefore start to expand into work with vulnerable families where there was compromised parenting, which might not meet the threshold for child protection. At the same time, there has been increased awareness nationally of the key issues regarding broader safeguarding, child exploitation and forced marriage, and there have been all sorts of additional guidelines that continue to expand as our knowledge and understanding of safeguarding within a complex and multicultural society develops. Therefore, it is important that we are able to rise to that challenge.

[97] **Peter Black:** You raised the issue of the importance of the skills, experience and knowledge of local safeguarding children board chairs as well as of their independence. In your experience, how do those issues impact on the work of the LSCB?

[98] **Ms Lebacqz:** There is probably not enough experience around, even now, to be able to undertake succession planning confidently in relation to chairing arrangements. In Wrexham, our experience has been to have the chairing of the safeguarding board undertaken by a chief officer who is not responsible for children's social care. We have been in the

fortunate position of that person having a background in children's social care, and so fully understanding the safeguarding agenda. There will be certain key individuals in key agencies, such as the health service and the police, who will also have that depth of experience and understanding. However, in relation to their having the capacity to take on the chairing role and the independent aspect of that, it will vary from authority to authority.

1.40 p.m.

[99] It will be for the committee to reach its own conclusions, but it may well want to look at offering the opportunity for some LSCBs to have independent chairs who are paid for independently, and for others to have the opportunity to experiment with in-kind contributions from member agencies. Whatever the committee concludes, it would be particularly helpful if a national training programme could be developed for the chairs of LSCBs so that there can be a consistent approach to chairing arrangements and consistent expectations of how the duties of a chair should be undertaken. In my view, that would be very helpful.

[100] **Peter Black:** It is increasingly common practice for the chair of an LSCB to be either the director of social services or, as in your case, a chief officer from within social services. Even when that chair is not directly responsible for children's services in the authority, there is a difficulty with the public perception, when you have a serious case review, for example, in separating out the two roles, particularly if the authority is being criticised by the serious case review. Is that a problem that needs to be addressed a bit more urgently than you have set out, to try to establish better the independence of the chairs?

[101] **Ms Lebacqz:** As you are aware, there is now a requirement for serious case reviews to be chaired independently, and it is acknowledged to be best practice for overview report writers to be appointed independently. That is certainly what we have done in Wrexham. We have sought the services of an expert—although I have to say that the pool of experts available is limited, which is another issue. The fact that the serious case reviews have these elements of independence assists with the fact that many safeguarding children boards are currently chaired by directors of social services or similar.

[102] **Peter Black:** It is still the chair of the board who ends up presenting the report even though it is independently written, and it is still the board that considers what goes into the summary, which is what is published, not the full report.

[103] **Ms Lebacqz:** I would agree, but there is quite a lot of robustness built in with the independent overview report writer and with the chair of the serious case review itself being independent. The chair of the serious case review will make representations to the LSCB when it considers that report.

[104] **Peter Black:** Would it be easier if the report itself were made public, so that you could then see the independent side of it?

[105] **Ms Lebacqz:** The difficulty with making the full report public is that, first, they are very detailed—the chronologies can be hundreds of pages long. Secondly, the underlying premise of the serious case review in the first instance is to learn from what happened and to allow practitioners to speak freely and openly about any difficulties that they may have experienced. A completely published document, particularly in the current climate, would put off some practitioners from sharing that information.

[106] **Peter Black:** I can understand that, but the issue is what goes into the summary and who is responsible for that. That is what has caused controversy. Moving on, you reference the capacity issues for regional organisations such as health, probation and the police in fielding appropriate levels of representation. How much of an issue is that and do you have

any concerns about the recent NHS reorganisation exacerbating those issues?

[107] **Ms Lebacqz:** The recent NHS reorganisation has taken time to work its way through the system. From our experience at our local safeguarding board, we have been fairly fortunate in being able to keep a sustained representation from health—that is, the same personnel. So, we have managed to maintain that consistency. However, it is onerous for organisations such as the health service and the police to field sufficient representatives at a senior level to all of the local safeguarding children boards. Members may be aware that two of the joint boards are based in north Wales—Gwynedd and Ynys Môn have a joint board, as do Denbighshire and Conwy. Also, Wrexham is discussing with Flintshire the feasibility of a joint board.

[108] **Peter Black:** Some serious case reviews have identified communication issues, particularly with regard to the police and the health service, as contributory factors in the death or suffering of children. Do you think that the fact that you have difficulties with regard to senior staff representation means that those lessons are not being taken back to those organisations?

[109] **Ms Lebacqz:** In Wrexham, our local experience is that we have been able to maintain representation at a senior level. So, in that sense, it has not been a particular issue for us. It is important to note that where there is a lesson to be learned from a serious case review in one particular area, it may have significance for the whole of the region. It is important that those lessons are fed right through a regional organisation and not just to the particular division or unit that serves the individual local safeguarding children board.

[110] **Irene James:** With regard to communication mechanisms between strategic partnerships and the safeguarding children boards, you say that there is a need to

[111] ‘ensure that all partnerships, including the LSB, listen, hear and even report into the LSCB on their work which links to the broader safeguarding agenda.’

[112] Can you give some examples of the difficulties arising from current arrangements?

[113] **Ms Lebacqz:** Currently, as Members will be aware, there is the local safeguarding children board, and three key partnerships that have an impact on the work that happens with children and safeguarding, namely the community safety partnership, the health, social care and wellbeing partnership, and the children and young people’s partnership. In Wrexham, we have worked hard to develop relationships across the four partnerships. We have an annual conference for the LSCB, the first of which was an event for those four partnerships to develop mechanisms for us to interface. One early success was to develop services for children of parents who misuse drugs and alcohol. Those were funded initially through the safeguarding and support department, and were then taken up by the community safety partnership. That has since fed into the work that Wrexham is doing as a pioneer authority for the integrated family support teams. That was an example of good practice.

[114] Getting that to happen for everything all the time is more difficult because there is not a definite established mechanism that underlines how the partnerships should relate to each other. We make it work locally, but we do so through our interpretation of what are fairly limited guidelines on working together.

[115] **David Lloyd:** I would like to move on to discuss funding. In your paper, you refer to the rising cost of undertaking serious case reviews. For the record, can you tell us why these costs are rising? Are such rises impacting on your ability to undertake effectively the range of local safeguarding children board functions?

[116] **Ms Lebacq:** The costs have risen because the 2006 guidance expanded the scope of serious case reviews quite significantly. Members will be aware that that has recently been reviewed and a proposal has been put forward regarding how serious case reviews might operate in future, which is quite a helpful recommendation. That means that serious case reviews happen more frequently under the current guidance. As I stated in an earlier answer, it is considered to be best practice, and I agree that an independent overview report writer should be appointed. Given the level of expertise required, the purchase of those skills is quite expensive.

1.50 a.m.

[117] **David Lloyd:** In your view, why is the role of business manager the best model for local safeguarding children boards? Is this the model that you have in Wrexham?

[118] **Ms Lebacq:** We have a sort of halfway house in Wrexham in that one of the heads of service in my department has a remit to be the business manager for the board. However, it is not a full-time designated post to the local safeguarding children board. Given the scope of the agenda for safeguarding, having a dedicated business manager gives you much more capacity to progress chase and sheeppdog all of the agencies around the LSCB to continue to meet their obligations.

[119] **David Lloyd:** Excellent. In your evidence, you recommend that

[120] ‘an exercise into identifying the real cost of running an effective LSCB should be commissioned’

[121] Do you have estimates as to what the current shortfall is within your local authority?

[122] **Ms Lebacq:** It depends how you measure it in some respects. At the moment, all member agencies provide some in-kind contribution, which, in a sense, reflects their size and access to resources. However, in terms of financial contributions, a much more limited number of players contribute to local safeguarding children boards. In the last financial year, Wrexham was able to operate a formula first devised by Gwynedd and Ynys Môn to help meet some of the costs. Consequently, our budget for 2009-10 was £40,000. The lion’s share of that came from the local authority, with a significant contribution from health, and smaller contributions from the police and the probation service, and a small grant from the Welsh Assembly Government. However, that only reflects part of the resources that are needed to run the board. If I were to factor in the additional staff costs that come from my department, it would easily double that figure.

[123] **Darren Millar:** That sounds as if it is line with the Welsh Government’s review group recommendation, which suggested a figure of around £100,000 per board. You referred there to a funding formula that had been agreed between Gwynedd and Ynys Môn. How did they arrive at that? Can you send us more information on that?

[124] **Ms Lebacq:** I can ask Gwynedd’s business manager to forward that information to you. It was a fairly rough and ready calculation based around population sizes and levels of activity, and so on, but it does exist.

[125] **Darren Millar:** It was seen as being fair by the partners, however, which is the main point. Thank you for that; it was very interesting. Irene James is next.

[126] **Irene James:** I have asked my question, Chair.

[127] **Darren Millar:** Sorry, it was to be Helen Mary’s question. As she is not here, I will

ask it. In terms of vulnerable groups, you indicate in your paper that you had some difficulty in terms of capacity issues and with the cost of promoting the protection and welfare of specific vulnerable groups, especially as new vulnerable groups are being identified all the time—as a new case arises, for example. What challenges do you face in that regard? Is it easy to quantify those challenges, and what level of resources might you need to meet them?

[128] **Ms Lebacqz:** There are two sets of challenges. There is the challenge of quite significant safeguarding issues that can happen to very small specific groups of children or young people, which do not occur very frequently in a community such as Wrexham, but when they do occur it is important that we are able to identify them and to respond in a sensitive and appropriate way. Having access to the expertise and advice to be able to deal with that is valuable and important. For example, we had a case in which there was some indication that there might have been a forced marriage. We sought advice and guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government and, in due course, we were able to give an appropriate response to that situation. We have learned further from that case by using it as what we call a case of special interest. We have multi-agency meetings for practitioners to reflect on particularly interesting or unusual cases to consolidate what can be learned from them. We did that with this particular incident. Linked to that, because communities are getting more diverse, having access to a range of different language skills to be able to respond to families in their language of first choice can be a challenge, given that that person also has to have expertise in safeguarding.

[129] **Darren Millar:** You talk about the concept of beacon local safeguarding children boards as a way forward in terms of expertise and so on. Would that approach help to address the specific issue that you raise about vulnerable groups that may crop up once or twice in a decade?

[130] **Ms Lebacqz:** We put forward this view on the basis that it would be a relatively low-cost way of dealing with it and that it would acknowledge that certain local authorities in Wales are more likely to have regular experience of these kinds of issues than others and this would therefore enable us to tap into that experience relatively easily. The infrastructure across the different areas for sharing child protection practice is quite good in general. Wales has the benefit of having all-Wales child protection procedures, for example.

[131] **Darren Millar:** So, that would make the establishment of a beacon board easier.

[132] **Val Lloyd:** I have a question on information sharing. In the evidence from Wrexham, it is stated that

[133] ‘across Wales a number of information sharing protocols exist for LSCBs’

[134] and that

[135] ‘it would be useful to harmonise these into an all Wales approach’.

[136] That is very relevant to what you have just said. However, taking the opposite view, the Welsh Government LSCB review group states that while guidance on the issue of information sharing

[137] ‘has been updated and revised on a number of occasions’,

[138] a number of professionals working with children and families continue to be unclear about the statutory framework for information sharing and disclosure. Would the harmonisation of existing protocols, as you recommend in your evidence, make a difference on the ground?

[139] **Ms Lebacqz:** I think that it would, because it is about giving one consistent message to all the professionals involved about the expectations around information sharing, particularly if that information sharing is able to add greater clarification on the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 duties that now exist. It can be confusing and difficult for individual practitioners when faced with a particularly individual situation to know the extent to which they can share information about it. While the basic message is always put across that if you have a child protection concern you have a justification for sharing information, understandably, some individuals will feel unsure about how far they can go with that.

[140] **Peter Black:** I have two quick points on information sharing. First, it is often the case, particularly where several partners are involved, that systems are not compatible. How will that be overcome? That is an easy one for you. [*Laughter.*] Secondly, you are talking about professionals, but often the point of contact with a child is someone who does not have specialist training on children, particularly in the police, the health service or some of the bigger organisations. How do you ensure that the proper protocols on information-sharing are driven down to those people who are not specifically child professionals?

2.00 p.m.

[141] **Ms Lebacqz:** I will take the second point first. To me, this illustrates the importance of trying to have one completely agreed information-sharing protocol across all of the agencies. As with all other local safeguarding children boards, we have a programme of child protection training, including basic child protection awareness training, which we offer to anybody who comes into contact with children or young people and their families. Third-sector organisations would access that training, including all manner of people who work with children, such as preschool and playgroup leaders. If you had one clear and relatively simple and understandable expectation relating to information-sharing, that message could be put across through that training and through the leaflets and so on that we produce for different groups of individuals. There would be definite benefits in that.

[142] With regard to shared IT systems—

[143] **Peter Black:** And manual systems.

[144] **Ms Lebacqz:** In Wales, we have three or four different providers of information systems for the different local authority social services' departments. Wrexham, for instance, is part of a consortium of eight authorities that use one particular provider. However, the health system will be different and the police system will be different again. Progress is being made in terms of the secure exchange of information through greater sign-up to the Government secure intranet system, but the technicians probably need to have a further think about whether there is a way in which we can interface those systems more effectively, or indeed develop a system that covers all of us.

[145] **Peter Black:** Is this an issue that relates to child protection registers as well, because different systems are used by different authorities? You cannot have an all-Wales child protection register, for example, because the authorities are on different systems.

[146] **Ms Lebacqz:** That is correct. We need to be clear about what the function of a child protection register is. My view on its function is probably a fairly old-fashioned one: that it provides a signal mechanism. When a register inquiry is made, for example, it signals to the registered custodian that there are further concerns emerging about that child that may mean that there is a need to go back to the child protection plan much sooner. It is a sort of early alert system, and it also helps us to not lose track of case histories when children are no longer

on the register. It is important that there is somebody with local knowledge who co-ordinates any register inquiries and so on.

[147] **Peter Black:** It becomes difficult to establish patterns when children move between authorities, and when they go to different accident and emergency departments for successive visits, rather than to the same ones.

[148] **Darren Millar:** In terms of a register inquiry, does your request for information leave a footprint on the register, as it were?

[149] **Ms Lebacqz:** Yes.

[150] **Darren Millar:** Okay. That happens on some of the other registers, does it not? I just wanted to make sure that it also happens with this one.

[151] On the involvement of children and young people, both you and the representatives from Caerphilly who gave evidence earlier referred in written evidence to the fact that some 'shadow' or 'junior' boards had been established in some parts of Wales. You said that you felt that that was a good idea and could be replicated in other parts of the country. Could you tell us why you think that that is a good model? Do you think that it could be replicated locally everywhere, which would be quite a feat, or do you think that a more regional or national approach might be more appropriate?

[152] **Ms Lebacqz:** At the moment, Wrexham does not have its own junior local safeguarding children board. When we saw some of the work emerging from some of the other local safeguarding children boards that do have them, we were quite excited by the prospect and we felt that it was something that we would like to take forward.

[153] One of the advantages of having that system is that it helps to get away from tokenism. Participation by children and young people can mean having only one or two as part of a dry process and a procedurally orientated meeting. You probably would not get much of a contribution from them, whereas if they had responsibility for their own board, they could set their own agenda, we could make sure that there was a mechanism whereby they could feed into the local safeguarding children board, and we could build in a requirement that that local safeguarding children board would take account of the agenda that any junior safeguarding children board would have. I know that there are a couple of different models for operating it: one local authority has a free-standing junior local safeguarding children board and another uses its children and young people senedd to act as a junior board on certain occasions during the year. At the moment, we would like to look at those models to see which one might be appropriate for us.

[154] My view—and it is my view at present, not the board's, as we have not had a chance to do this work—is that if more local safeguarding children boards could develop junior boards, you could then have a network, possibly facilitated by an office such as the children's commissioner's, that would get to grips with what constitutes the safeguarding agenda for the children and young people of Wrexham and whether we are addressing that agenda nationally.

[155] **Darren Millar:** Do you think that guidance on the involvement of young people should be more prescriptive and should spell out some of these things, or is it best left to local determination?

[156] **Ms Lebacqz:** I think that it depends on what you are being prescriptive about. If you were being prescriptive about what you expected from the young people themselves, that would make it very difficult; however, if you were being prescriptive about saying that local

safeguarding children boards have a duty to strengthen participation, that would be quite helpful.

[157] **Darren Millar:** Thank you. If there are no further questions, I will just thank you for attending today. We have appreciated your written and oral evidence. If there is anything that you think that we have missed, please feel free to send us further information as evidence to the inquiry. Thank you.

2.09 p.m.

**Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor i Fyrddau Lleol Diogelu Plant—Tystiolaeth gan  
Ymddiriedolaeth Prawf Cymru  
Committee Inquiry into Local Safeguarding Children Boards—Evidence from  
Wales Probation Trust**

[158] **Darren Millar:** We now move straight on to our next session and will continue to take evidence on this subject—this time from the Wales Probation Trust. I am delighted to welcome Anthony Richards, the assistant chief officer, and Liz Rijnenberg, the interim director for local delivery. We have received your paper, which has been circulated to Members and we have all had a chance to look at it. Therefore, we will go straight to questions, if that is okay with you.

[159] The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales report of October 2009, which reviewed the operation of local safeguarding children boards, states that,

[160] ‘There remains a general concern that the remit for the wider safeguarding role can divert attention from child protection’.

[161] Do you have a view on those findings?

[162] **Ms Rijnenberg:** In a sense, our view, and our experience of probation, is that it has been the opposite, in effect, for us: the focus has remained on child protection and has not necessarily taken a broader safeguarding approach. An example of that would be us wanting to drive forward issues in relation to the wider safeguarding issues around the children of prisoners or offenders. That has not been driven forward and there has been a focus on narrower child protection issues. I do not know if Tony would like to add anything to that.

[163] **Mr Richards:** I think that I would agree broadly with that. Many front-line probation staff, especially in south Wales—it is more difficult to talk for the whole of Wales—would still view child protection as the key issue, rather than the wider role. There are probably lots of reasons for that and lots of people who are responsible for it, and we would not duck those responsibilities ourselves.

2.10 p.m.

[164] It might go back to the original roll-out of safeguarding boards, when I think, from my experience, that it was assumed more than it was made explicit that there was a broader agenda. It was not made explicit that safeguarding was a totally different issue, and that child protection was but a part of it. I do not think that we had enough discussion or information at the time to be able to cascade that down to other agencies. It may be that other witnesses have the same view, but it is certainly true for probation. There is a joint responsibility for this. I would not say that this is a fundamental criticism of the process, but the remedy needs to start somewhere.

[165] **Darren Millar:** That is something that we heard from the previous witness: that the safeguarding agenda is often put to one side while the protection agenda is the focus. How do you think that that can be addressed? Is it a resourcing issue rather than an issue of will?

[166] **Ms Rijnenberg:** I am guessing that it is a bit of both. Thinking back to how we got into this situation, there was a huge fear when we moved from the area child protection committees to the safeguarding boards that suddenly the focus was on safeguarding, and that we would lose the child protection aspect. It is an evolutionary thing, and we are now at a stage when it would be much easier, resource-wise and culture-wise, to move on to the wider safeguarding agenda, to build that into action plans and be clear about the need to encompass the two elements.

[167] **Darren Millar:** Your paper also talks about the fact that we have 22 local safeguarding children boards across Wales, and you seem to suggest that this is far too many. You say that you ‘question the wisdom’ of continuing with this system. Are you, therefore, advocating a different arrangement—perhaps a regional or national arrangement? How do you think that things could be arranged better?

[168] **Ms Rijnenberg:** I am saying that it is the view of colleagues in the Wales Probation Trust that 22 is an awful lot of local safeguarding boards to work with. We see the importance of local authorities and specific areas having a safeguarding board, but when you look at the sub-groups of those boards, and their effectiveness in terms of moving forward the work of the boards, you can see the difficulties. There are numerous ways that you could arrange things if you wanted to reduce the number—it would be good if we could—but you would have to look at the other structures, such as local authorities, community safety partnerships and health boards in order to do so.

[169] We have moved from four area trusts to one Wales Probation Trust. We are an organisation with a budget of around £50,000, but safeguarding and child protection are critical to us; it is day-to-day bread-and-butter work for us. For a £50,000 organisation to service 22 boards at a senior level, and to make the necessary commitment to practice and monitoring, training and other sub-groups is incredibly difficult, but we want to do it.

[170] **Mr Richards:** That has been the real difficulty. Our attendance at the boards is almost always at the level of assistant chief officer, and it is almost always 100 per cent. If you do not get an assistant chief officer there, a district manager will attend, and that will only happen because the assistant chief officer is either on leave or doing something that is immovable. The real problem, as Liz has said, is with resourcing. We do not have the staff to give that sort of commitment to training sub-groups, and the performance and monitoring sub-groups, right across Wales. We want to give that commitment—we are totally signed up to the principle—but it is very difficult to do so due to the sheer number of sub-groups that some boards can generate, alongside all of the other committee structures and boards that we are also involved with. Twenty-two boards is a challenging number. You will hear mixed views on this. If you stand 20 probation officers in a line, you will probably get 20 different views; however, there was a broad view across Wales that we should look at this issue.

[171] **Ms Rijnenberg:** It is the difference between what you would like to see and the reality of the situation. It would be great to have 22 boards and to be able to service them effectively, but the reality is that it is very difficult. I do not know if I said that we are a £50,000 organisation, but I should correct myself if I did, because we are a £50 million organisation.

[172] **Darren Millar:** I was going to say that. *[Laughter.]* I could understand you complaining about resources if it was £50,000. Peter, I think that we have touched on your question.

[173] **Peter Black:** I was going to ask about value for money, given a budget of £50,000. [*Laughter.*] I think that you have largely answered my question. In terms of representation at the board, the issue that I have raised with the previous two witnesses is that when a serious case review comes up, for example, and there are recommendations that may impact upon your organisation, is the representative on that particular board senior enough to drive forward any changes that are needed across the whole organisation?

[174] **Ms Rijnenberg:** Yes, absolutely. We have been committed to that since the commencement of the safeguarding boards.

[175] **Lorraine Barrett:** In respect of the relationship between the safeguarding boards and other strategic partnerships, you say that a much simpler and clearer planning process is required. That ties in with what you started to talk about with regard to 22 boards as well. You also say that you need to be mindful of the responsibilities held by the probation trust, the prison service and the police through the multi-agency public protection arrangements to ensure that co-ordination works properly. That ties in with what you were saying earlier. So could you say a bit more about the strategic partnerships becoming simpler and clearer, and then something about the issue of co-ordination between all of the partnerships?

[176] **Mr Richards:** Perhaps I could start by saying a little about public protection, and the comment that was made about linkages. The multi-agency public protection arrangements, or MAPPA, are a statutory responsibility, so each area has to have them in place, and they are overseen by a strategic management board, or SMB, and, again, that has to exist as well. The SMB should reflect the community; it should have all of the key partnership agencies involved, as well as the responsible authorities, so, in this case, that would mean the police, prison and probation services. As with the safeguarding boards, there needs to be representation at the right level so that agencies are represented properly and policy can be talked through, and funding committed if necessary. One difficulty that existed in south Wales for a while with our SMB was that there was not a good dialogue with safeguarding boards or child protection. There was not a clear representative from across the authorities in south Wales and it was difficult to have the discussions that we needed to have to ensure that, first, safeguarding was a key role for the SMB, and something that it should be curious about and interested in, and comment on, and, conversely, that public protection—that is, managing dangerous offenders appropriately—became part of the discussions at safeguarding boards, because that is relevant there also. It would have been critical had we not been able to resolve it fairly recently with one senior local authority officer now having a role to represent local authorities across south Wales on safeguarding. So, that is a very recent development, and we have managed to close the door on that. It was an issue when these notes were prepared, but it has now been dealt with quite satisfactorily.

[177] It led to an interesting discussion about core work. I do not really like that expression, because sometimes it leads you into silos, but the discussion that we had in the SMB about child protection and safeguarding on the one hand and public protection and managing risk and dangerous people on the other was that it was easy to identify for probation and the police that that was very much our core work. We were not so good at indicating to other agencies that it needed to be their core work also, because it had to be of interest to them. Conversely, on safeguarding and child protection and so on, I think that probably a number of staff from the probation service and other agencies saw this as being fundamentally the core work of local authorities such as Barnardo's and the NSPCC, and we were there on the periphery, contributing to or taking part in the discussions. Again, that is not right—it needs to be core work for us as well. Bringing the two together was surprisingly difficult, but the role of the SMB has helped us to deliver that.

2.20 p.m.

[178] **Ms Rijnenberg:** Just to add to the range of comments that were made there about safeguarding boards and other partnerships, and the relationships there, the issue is that there is no consistency across the 22 authorities about the way in which safeguarding boards interact with children and young people's partnerships, community safety partnerships, and so on. When it does work well, and you get a good, co-ordinated focus on children and safeguarding through a community safety partnership or through the reducing reoffending agenda, it tends to happen because of individuals, rather than because you have the correct structures and linkages. A few years ago, when I was an assistant chief officer and I sat on the safeguarding boards in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr, we had a big event in Merthyr Tydfil where we brought all the partnerships together to try to work out how to sort out these issues—not just for the safeguarding board but for the children and young people's partnership and CSP—because everyone was trying to get the focus of their plans linked in with those of others, but it was absolutely overwhelming. We never bottomed it out. The obvious thing seems to be fewer boards and simpler structures.

[179] **Darren Millar:** Simpler structures than in the current arrangements, I take it.

[180] **David Lloyd:** Turning to funding and to the issues that you cover in your paper, which are multifarious, we have received evidence from the Association of Chief Police Officers Cymru, which stated that a local safeguarding children board funding formula is required to assist agencies. Would that address the concerns about funding? If so, what kind of funding formula would you like to see?

[181] **Ms Rijnenberg:** The initial funding formula was around 2.5 per cent for the probation trust, which, when you add up the number of safeguarding boards, comes to quite a lot of our £50 million budget. It also depends on what that funding formula covers. If you have a situation similar to the one in Bridgend, where there were a number of child deaths, then you start to have to deal with huge numbers of serious case reviews, which are very expensive in agency time and overarching costs. However, there must be a way of defining it so that everyone pays a contribution and everyone has that shared responsibility. That is the starting point. If you commit money to something, it means that you are serious about it and want to do it. The other option would be to have a larger sum of money put into safeguarding boards. However, each agency must pay a percentage to make it work.

[182] **Darren Millar:** We heard that a formula is operating in Gwynedd and Ynys Môn, in north-west Wales, which partners seem to think is fair. Is that a formula that could be replicated elsewhere?

[183] **Ms Rijnenberg:** I do not know what that formula is.

[184] **Darren Millar:** However, you think that a nationally-imposed formula is the way forward, do you?

[185] **Ms Rijnenberg:** The idea of a formula is good, as long as it is proportionate to people's budgets.

[186] **Val Lloyd:** We did not have any more detail on that, but the general thrust was that that has been taken forward.

[187] **Ms Rijnenberg:** I think that Swansea local safeguarding children board was close to doing that originally.

[188] **Mr Richards:** The decision in south Wales to fund each board to the tune of £1,000 a year predates the boards and goes back to the days of the area child protection committees.

The decision was taken by the then South Wales Probation Service, not the trust, to allocate an equal amount of funding across the board because there was no consensus across each of the ACPCs at that time as to what was a fair contribution. Some were looking for £10,000 to £15,000, and others were more realistic—I would say that, would I not?—and looked at smaller sums, with us contributing in other ways, perhaps in kind.

[189] It has been sensitive and has frustrated chairs of boards and some of our colleagues on the boards who contribute more. We have managed the frustration because of the quality of the relationships that exist between the various representatives within the boards. However, we are aware that it will not go away. Any formula that could also recognise that it is not just about hard cash but can be about other contributions would be quite helpful. We have a similar debate with the youth offending service with regard to the youth offending teams across Wales.

[190] **Darren Millar:** It will be difficult to crack this one because of the devolved areas of responsibility and the non-devolved areas of responsibility.

[191] **Ms Rijnenberg:** They are still funded from—

[192] **Darren Millar:** Precisely. Therefore, the Assembly Government cannot crack this on its own by just issuing a sort of formula and say, ‘Everyone must pay this’, because, of course, your arrangements are—

[193] **Ms Rijnenberg:** As an all-Wales organisation now, it puts us in a better position. We have NOMS Cymru, which puts us in a better position with our commissioner to be able to look at these things.

[194] **David Lloyd:** Turning now to the role of the local safeguarding children boards in protecting a range of vulnerable groups, you state in your paper:

[195] ‘On paper this looks impressive with protocols in place to cover a large number of specific groups. However...they tend to be over-wordy, and...not well known to or well understood by many practitioners.’

[196] What evidence base did you use to come to that view?

[197] **Ms Rijnenberg:** A lot of work has been done by safeguarding boards in providing guidance on how to protect vulnerable groups, and on specific issues in relation to vulnerable groups, but it is just such a huge amount. The papers are often very lengthy, and, quite often, if you are sitting on three or four safeguarding boards, you can get variations of the paper that you then implement. Therefore, for us, we could have 22 different papers and it all gets very complicated. That, really, is the evidence base. It is probably to do with the evolution of safeguarding boards. We have got to the point where we are managing to do the front end of things and get the papers, but it is now about trying to find the evidence that the implementation of those papers is having an effect on the outcomes for those particular groups of children. I do not have any evidence of the outcomes of the papers that are being produced at present, so I think that they need to feed in more clearly to the action plans of the safeguarding boards.

[198] In the probation service—this is our responsibility—we are very keen to move forward the issue of safeguarding those vulnerable children who are the children of people in prison and those on community orders. For example, there is no prison in Wales for women prisoners and so children have to travel long distances to see their mother. That might happen during the week, so they might be taken out of school to make those journeys. Sometimes, you will find that the teachers at the school do not know that the child has a parent in prison

and might not know that a parent has been in trouble and is on probation. All of those things add to that child becoming a hidden victim of crime. We need to make sure that we get more of a focus on that aspect of vulnerability in the safeguarding boards.

[199] **David Lloyd:** Turning now to another aspect of safeguarding children, which is information sharing, we have seen failings over the years in some serious case reviews. There is a feeling that a number of professionals working with children and families continue to be unclear about the statutory framework for information sharing and disclosure. That has been said to us. Would you agree with that in terms of a lack of clarity, or are people just not confident in what they can and cannot share with other professionals?

[200] **Ms Rijnenberg:** I think that there is still a lack of clarity about what people can and cannot share at some levels of our organisation. Some aspects are really good, and I think that people are clearer on what they can and cannot share at the more senior levels of the organisation. However, we still have instances of partner agencies, particularly the voluntary sector organisations, being unsure about sharing information. It is not that I think that it does not get shared, but I think that the time lag in the sharing of it can have an impact on safeguarding and child protection, and we have had some instances in our organisation when we have not always necessarily been clear about what we can share, and when, at practitioner level.

2.30 p.m.

[201] **Darren Millar:** Did you say that that is a particular issue for voluntary organisations?

[202] **Ms Rijnenberg:** Yes. Sometimes, when we are working with voluntary organisations, for example a counselling agency dealing with substance misuse, it can be difficult for those at the lower level of the organisation to know at what point they should share things and how much they should share. However, that is not always necessarily to do with a lack of clarity about the protocols of sharing so much as the interpretation of them. Without going into specific cases, it is quite difficult to explain.

[203] **Darren Millar:** We understand.

[204] **Val Lloyd:** I have a question on serious case reviews. You touched on the general issue in answer to Lorraine's question on partnership. In respect of serious case reviews, you say in your evidence that a more direct relationship with multi-agency public protection arrangements strategic management boards—or MAPPAs SMBs, to use your acronyms—would be beneficial and add to a wider scope than the local authority-based perspectives that most boards take. In practice, how should these relationships be improved?

[205] **Mr Richards:** If I have understood you correctly—please tell me if I have not—the fact that we now have a constant member who can represent safeguarding boards across south Wales on the strategic management board of MAPPAs will help. I would expect relevant reviews to be brought to quarterly strategic management board meetings for discussion and information-sharing purposes so that they can learn lessons and understand action plans, just as I would hope the occasional serious further offence reviews that the strategic management board reviews could, where the lessons learnt are appropriate, be passed back to safeguarding boards; that should pick up the issues.

[206] **Val Lloyd:** I was more interested in how you think the relationship should be improved; would that be the way to do it?

[207] **Mr Richards:** Yes, I think so; I am sorry that that is not a very full answer. It provides the vehicle, and any difficulties can be discussed formally—and maybe less formally

if necessary—through that route.

[208] **Darren Millar:** If the witnesses have nothing further to add, and as there are no further questions for them, we come to the end of this part of our agenda. Thank you, Liz and Anthony, for your attendance. If you want to raise any further issues with us, please submit them as written evidence—we would be glad to take that on board.

2.33 p.m.

### **Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion**

[209] **Darren Millar:** I am going to ask the committee to agree to go into private session until 3 p.m., so that we can discuss the key issues arising from our inquiries into wheelchair services and neonatal care. I propose that

*[210] the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37(vi).*

[211] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.  
Motion carried.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 2.34 p.m.  
The public part of the meeting ended at 2.34 p.m.*

*Ailymgynullodd y pwyllgor yn gyhoeddus am 3.08 p.m.  
The committee reconvened in public at 3.08 p.m.*

### **Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor i Fyrddau Lleol Diogelu Plant—Tystiolaeth gan Heddluoedd Cymru Committee Inquiry into Local Safeguarding Children Boards—Evidence from Welsh Police Forces**

[212] **Darren Millar:** I am pleased to welcome detective superintendent Pam Kelly, who is representing the police forces in Wales, to our meeting. We have circulated your paper to Members, so if you are content, we will go straight into questions. You say in your written evidence that, when considering the changes in legislation concerning the statutory obligations of the safeguarding children boards, it is considered that in some local authority areas there has been little change or progress in the way in which the boards function since the area child protection committees were dissolved. Can you tell us a little more about why you feel that that is the case?

3.10 p.m.

[213] **Ms Kelly:** Certainly. It is worth my saying first of all that I consulted with my colleagues across Wales before coming here today. It is fair to say that, generally speaking, LSCBs have led to a great deal of improvement around safeguarding children throughout Wales. However, some of my colleagues, particularly in south Wales, have indicated that some of that relies very much on personalities rather than on things being delivered, for example, on people who understand the issues around safeguarding and not just child protection, because we have moved on a great deal from just dealing with child protection issues to understanding the wider concerns around safeguarding and providing those early

intervention opportunities, which is clearly what we all want to do.

[214] Some of my colleagues in south Wales have indicated that, because there has perhaps been a lack of scrutiny and, to a point, a little lack of direction around some of the issues of what safeguarding boards should be doing, we were a bit slow on the take-up in some areas in ensuring that safeguarding was addressed, and not just child protection.

[215] **Darren Millar:** Are there any areas where it is worse than in others? You mentioned south Wales. Is it patchy across Wales?

[216] **Ms Kelly:** I think that it is fair to say that it is patchy across Wales. Some local safeguarding children boards are working very effectively and others are slow in the take-up. However, if I may move on to a piece of evidence that may illustrate that point, the self-assessment tool that was sent out from the Welsh Assembly Government for local safeguarding children boards is now helping to remedy that because that has given clear direction to what is expected of local safeguarding children's boards. The representatives at those boards are clear about what they are expected to achieve, and with the joint inspection now due in the next 12 months on local safeguarding children boards, those work plans and self-assessments may help to take some of the work forward. There are certainly gaps in my view, however, and in my colleagues' views around us addressing, not child protection, but safeguarding issues, because there is a lack of clarity about what is available in Wales and within areas to provide that early service for early intervention for young people who are coming into contact with a number of agencies.

[217] **Darren Millar:** Dai Lloyd will now explore these issues a little further.

[218] **David Lloyd:** Building on that, the CSSIW local safeguarding children boards review report of October 2009 states that,

[219] 'there remains a general concern that the remit for the wider safeguarding role can divert attention from child protection.'

[220] Do you agree with that view?

[221] **Ms Kelly:** I could in part, because first, from the Welsh police service's point of view, child protection is clearly our main business and our main area of work. When we look at thresholds and early intervention opportunities, some of those young people do not always come into the police domain. When you look at children in need and so on, social services have the initial dealings. Child protection for us is about safeguarding children who have been sexually abused, and we also get involved in the investigation side of neglect and so on. Where we fail as agencies, and where there needs to be clear improvement for ourselves and for other agencies, is when, potentially, those children come in initially for shoplifting offences or when there may be domestic abuse at the home. How we pick up on those is within the child protection domain, and we need those early discussions—and we do have them—but where do we signpost those young people who clearly need help? That is where the safeguarding element comes in, and we need clear direction on the service availability from each local area.

[222] **David Lloyd:** That same CSSIW review report also states that,

[223] 'there is an imbalance in how organisations and professionals discharge their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, with too much reliance and expectation being placed on local authority social services.'

[224] How does that reflect your experiences of LSCBs across Wales?

[225] **Ms Kelly:** That is a fair comment, because child protection has precedence for us as the police service. Early intervention is all about early communication about individuals. An example that I can give in relation to Dyfed Powys is that, where we have opportunities, for example, where there has been domestic abuse in a home, we want to share the fact that that domestic incident has occurred—it may not have involved the child, but he or she may have been present in the home—with social services as early as possible to see whether or not we need to consider any other issues in that home. Across Wales, the picture is sketchy as to whether social services have the capacity to perform that role, because, again, it is about thresholds, recording data and early communication, but it is also about prioritising where the need is. Child protection is an area in which we do well in Wales. We make mistakes and there is room for improvement, but the safeguarding agenda is so vast, it is difficult for agencies to know what is really expected of them and what safeguarding means in Wales.

[226] **Lorraine Barrett:** We have heard evidence on the capacity issues for regional organisations, such as health, probation and the police, in fielding appropriate levels of representation. How much of an issue is this in your experience?

[227] **Ms Kelly:** As far as regional work is concerned, there is clearly merit in joint training, where there are cost issues, as well as in enhancing information sharing, in particular, of co-location, so that we work collaboratively as a child protection unit. It would not just consist of police officers, but also social workers and team leaders, so that that early dialogue can take place and there is an opportunity for that information to be shared in a much more streamlined fashion. If that was supported by joint information and communications technology systems, so that we shared information and had access to the same information 24 hours a day, collaboration in that vein would be a way forward.

[228] Collaboration on response is different. We work jointly in child protection, but for safeguarding work, there are some thresholds that may involve low level—I know that there is no such a thing as low level—early intervention opportunities, which the police service would not always be involved in. We would be involved in the information exchange, but not in the response. We want to be involved with those investigations—which is our role—into child abuse cases and so on. So, collaboration at a strategic level, which impacts on operational performance, around ICT, and around working together in the same location is a must for Wales.

[229] **David Lloyd:** I would like to move on to discuss partnerships, which are vitally important when we talk about safeguarding children. You say in your paper that there is a lack of clarity for local safeguarding children boards as to where they sit within the community safety partnership and the local service board arena, raising issues of accountability and duplication. How prevalent are these difficulties in your experience?

[230] **Ms Kelly:** The point that all of my colleagues who work in public protection and who head public protection in the Welsh police services have raised is that local governance is cloudy. There are local safeguarding boards, local service boards, community safety partnerships, children and young people's partnerships, substance misuse meetings; where do they all fit and who should local safeguarding children boards report to? When we look at the cost and the areas of work for each of those groups, the concern is: who has the overall picture locally to be able to feed into the Welsh issues and, where there is a local need for delivery, is there a duplication of service, is there joined-up thinking at a local level to be able to address those issues? All of my colleagues in the Welsh forces have said that they are trying to address those issues by raising them, but for that to be represented in a strategic document in policy would be helpful in order to support them in that governance structure, so that there is one person locally who has that bigger-picture understanding of the need within that community.

[231] **David Lloyd:** You also state in your evidence that key areas of work involving high-risk issues could be missed at a local level. What type of issues are you referring to?

3.20 p.m.

[232] **Ms Kelly:** I refer you to what I have just said. Given that all of these committees exist locally, I am concerned that each is undertaking a number of pieces of work, but wonder whether this is in line with some of the local strategic assessments that are taking place. Strategic assessments are all about threat, risk and concern, and projected threat and risk in relation to that community. For example, are there a lot of children going into your accident and emergency department who have been assaulted or involved in substance misuse? How many children and young people under 18 years of age are coming through police station custody suites? We know that there are quite high numbers of young people coming into custody. On some areas of work around volume, service provision and policy, the current structures have delivered an awful lot of good work, but, when we consider the cost and investment in some of those groups, there is a need for someone to look at the bigger picture, so that work is not lost between them.

[233] **David Lloyd:** To drill down on that point, are you concerned that there are many partnerships doing potentially different work, and/or that there are so many people involved in the partnerships that no-one is doing what they are supposed to be doing day to day, regardless of whether they are in partnership with someone else? Where does your concern spring from?

[234] **Ms Kelly:** My concerns are around the way in which groups are working locally. Although they have national priorities and issues of concern—such as the case of baby P—that we need to review in terms of structures within each organisation, we need to look at what is happening in each locality to give good data and understanding of the problems for these groups so that they can work effectively. That could be informed by strategic assessment to analyse that data. In some areas, work is being done to complete that. In other areas, it is very sketchy. When we look at service provision and investment, we want to be sure that we meet the needs of that locality and area. I am not sure that the thinking is as joined-up as it could be to meet those needs. Having said that, in Pembrokeshire, for example, an awful lot of information is shared about the work being done in each of those committees. However, where does the buck stop with regard to governance, and where is that reflected in policy?

[235] **Peter Black:** Moving on to funding, you say that a funding formula or guidance is required in order to assist agencies, as the lack of clarity is impacting on the long-term planning and extent of the work undertaken by LSCBs. Do you have any views on the nature and extent of the required funding formula?

[236] **Ms Kelly:** This is a critical area for LSCBs as far as Welsh police forces are concerned. Across Wales, some police forces do not contribute at all to LSCBs, but some police forces provide £5,000 to £10,000. This goes back to the issue that I raised earlier. Unless you know what work the LSCB needs to undertake, how will you know what resource investment needs to be made in terms of people to undertake some of the serious case review issues and areas of work that need to be sent out, such as in policy? The funding formula is crucial, because some agencies put nothing in the pot other than attending meetings. Other agencies end up hosting the events and providing meeting rooms and lunch as well as investing a lot of people and money to perform the work. It is almost a chicken-and-egg situation, because how proactive an LSCB is will depend on how much money and resource it needs. This is where the strategic thinking needs to be enhanced. Unless we look forward and use good data to inform what we want to achieve in the future, how can we realistically know

what resources we need to invest in? Agencies, including the police service, are guarded because they are not quite sure about some of the work plans that the LSCBs are trying to achieve. That can be an area of conflict. In Dyfed Powys Police, for example, we have four LSCBs. One could be very proactive and we would wish to give it £2,000 to £3,000, but one may not have its work plan on the table and we would not choose to give it anything. So, unless there is a funding formula at a policy or guidance level around contributions, we will be going round in circles, as we have done for about five or six years, on ensuring that the LSCBs have the funding that they need to complete the work that needs to be done.

[237] **Peter Black:** From what you are saying, it sounds as if it is wider than that, because it is about how effective the LSCBs are. Who has an overview of the work plans of LSCBs?

[238] **Ms Kelly:** A joint inspection will be taking place over the next 12 to 18 months, co-ordinated by CSSIW, which is very much welcomed. Funding is an area that could be scoped in to that inspection, because it is about what work needs to be done and what resources are needed, rather than saying 'Every year, we will give £5,000 to £10,000 to an LSCB' and then, when some of the key work is done, finding that it only needs £2,000. We need to approach it fluidly, but those work plans need to be fed in to and scrutinised at a Welsh Assembly Government level, and the inspection's remit should include looking at what funding formulae are working and where that is assisting the most proactive LSCBs.

[239] **Peter Black:** Is that not happening at the moment?

[240] **Ms Kelly:** It is happening in places. The inspection may be able to identify areas of good practice where the funding formula could be highlighted as effective and contributing to the work that the local board is doing.

[241] **Darren Millar:** To pick up on the issue of funding formulae, who should issue directions as to how the funding should come together? This is an area in which some matters are devolved and some are not devolved. The Assembly Government or a Welsh Minister could not instruct a police force in Wales to make any contribution at all—

[242] **David Lloyd:** Not at the moment.

[243] **Darren Millar:** Perhaps never. That is a big question that needs to be addressed. How do you see that being addressed?

[244] **Ms Kelly:** It is difficult to mandate what needs to be provided, but a suggested cohesive approach for the governance structure locally could come from the Welsh Assembly Government. As far as funding is concerned, we provide guidance, and if we are able to give guidance around when it is working well and where those contributions have been proactive, there will be a different school of thought around contributions. At the moment, LSCBs do not even feature on agency budgets. It is more of an ad hoc contribution than a contribution that is set in stone that would allow LSCBs to plan three to five years ahead. I do not know what the answer is, but my view is that it would be the provision of a formula in guidance, the rationale for which would be based on good practice in Wales.

[245] **Peter Black:** We have received evidence from one LSCB that it has struggled with capacity and cost in promoting the protection and welfare of specific groups of vulnerable children, such as asylum seekers and trafficked children. In your experience, are such challenges experienced more widely by LSCBs in Wales?

[246] **Ms Kelly:** I have just come from a meeting with the Assembly Government at Cathays park on child trafficking, and the issue is the same in police services across Wales. A combination of issues result in stretched services. Initially, we do not collect enough data on

some of these difficult areas for monitoring purposes. Secondly, the awareness of front-line staff needs to be improved for us to be able to monitor the impact that child trafficking, in particular, is having on agencies; there could be a link with the LSCBs regarding gaps in service in that area that could have an influence on what needs to be provided. We may arrest young people who are involved in drug trafficking or, as you will see in newspapers, in cannabis factories, and they are child and human trafficking issues, but they are also very much child protection issues. In my view—and it is not a view that I have discussed with colleagues—this is an area in which there are gaps in the understanding and knowledge of practitioners, in the data collection on the extent of the problem, as well as in practitioners taking early safeguarding opportunities at 2 a.m. or 3 a.m., when they are dealing with the children and young people who come in. Which services are available there and then to help practitioners? This is another chicken-and-egg situation. We do not really understand the extent of the problem, and we need to train our staff to feed that information back to us so that we can ensure that, from a Welsh perspective, we are fit for purpose.

3.30 p.m.

[247] Ironically, I know that we are not on our own here. The UK Border Agency and the authorities at Heathrow, which deal with these issues on a daily basis, are struggling with policy, awareness and training. I do not think that this is just a Welsh issue; it is an issue nationally.

[248] **Peter Black:** That leads me neatly on to my next question. The Welsh Government's LSCB review group report states that, while guidance on the issue of information sharing has been updated and revised on a number of occasions, a number of professionals working with children and families continue to be unclear about the statutory framework for information sharing and disclosure. In your experience, do issues related to information sharing continue to be a problem?

[249] **Ms Kelly:** It is fair to say that things have improved significantly since I started in the child protection arena. When we deal with a child protection issue where there is a clear need to safeguard the child, information sharing is very good, certainly within Dyfed-Powys, because of the excellent links that we have with partners. Strategy meetings are always a part of our child protection procedures and many other areas see that and are really pleased with how we work in Wales. With child protection, I feel that the information-sharing process is streamlined and very good.

[250] The thresholds are different in respect of safeguarding, however. Within the sexual health environment, there may be young people who require services at the age of 14, for example, and that is where information sharing becomes difficult. That is because of the consent issue and because we do not want young people to go underground, as it were. For me, there is an awful lot of work to be completed on information sharing in cases where, for example, you have a 13-year-old girl or boy who wants advice on contraception. That child is potentially vulnerable, and there is an imbalance relating to early intervention. We, as agencies, have a duty to protect that young person, but unless we, as agencies, share the fact that a 13-year-old child is going to a sexual health clinic, those early intervention opportunities will be missed. For me, that is where information sharing fails, both at a safeguarding level and at a child protection level.

[251] **Val Lloyd:** I have some questions on serious case reviews. In your evidence, you say that there is little consistency in the way in which SCRs are requested by local safeguarding children boards, stating that it often results in a risk-averse approach being taken, which, in turn, waters down the purpose and impact of serious case reviews. Could you explain that further for us, please?

[252] **Ms Kelly:** For all my colleagues, this is a real concern. Serious case reviews represent a key function whereby agencies can learn from mistakes, particularly in cases where there have been near misses or when, sadly, children have died. Local safeguarding children boards decide, as panels, which serious case reviews take place within their respective areas. Many years ago, there would be only two or three serious case reviews per year. Therefore, when serious case reviews were undertaken, you knew that they were serious and that agencies would always learn from them. That was because the recommendations were shared very quickly and key independent professionals undertook the reviews. The situation now is that a great many serious case reviews are taking place. As one of my colleagues in south Wales has already mentioned, perhaps there is a need for training among LSCB panels relating to when serious case reviews should be undertaken. At the Bridgend headquarters at the moment, I know that there are around 20 serious case reviews on the go. There are resource implications to asking somebody to undertake a serious case review. It means that, at times, you have more people completing reviews than there are out on the front line dealing with child protection issues. So, there is a balance to be struck between making sure that the serious case reviews are completed in time and doing them for the sake of meeting criteria.

[253] A greater concern when serious case reviews are undertaken is that there is no point in the recommendations being forwarded to agencies 12 months down the line. There is a need to learn from those recommendations straight away. That is often the case. Secondly, a real concern is who is looking at the bigger picture across Wales. If there is an example of learning within the police or multi-agency in Cardiff, I want to know about it in west Wales, so that I do not make the same mistake. Central co-ordination from the Welsh Assembly Government is essential to share good practice and to ensure fast learning between agencies, so that we do not learn about mistakes 10 months down the line when they are in the news. We need to learn about them quickly, so that we can double-check our own processes and policies to ensure that we are performing to the best of our ability at any one time.

[254] We need to streamline the resources, the finances and the fast-time learning in the context of serious case reviews—and ‘serious’ is the important word. Although Jonathon Corbett and his team at the CSSIW have again done some excellent work on reviewing serious case reviews across Wales, we need to be moving on now, by delivering and sending a clear message out to people about what we need to do. Since the review, which was only in October 2009, I know that there is a working group, and we are contributing to it, but we need to ensure that we are making progress, and that needs to be done sooner rather than later.

[255] **Val Lloyd:** My second question has been well answered, thank you.

[256] **Darren Millar:** There is just one final question for you. You say that the self-assessment tool to which you referred earlier has been helpful at picking up where the gaps might be, and that many LSCBs are drawing up action plans to plug those gaps. How has that been monitored by the Assembly Government?

[257] **Ms Kelly:** Again, this is where Jonathon Corbett and his team have come in. The self-assessment tool came out to ensure that we were working in accordance with the Children Act 2004, which is where all the safeguarding issues were introduced. The LSCBs have put together their work plans, which have been forwarded to the Welsh Assembly Government, and they are the basis for the future intended inspection. We need that inspection, which scrutinises those work plans, but it should not be a one-off. It should be about benchmarking standards now within LSCBs, looking at where the failings and the good practice are, and revisiting them perhaps in 10 or 12 months’ time to ensure that we keep up the momentum of learning and making progress.

[258] **Darren Millar:** Thank you for that evidence. It is very much appreciated. If you have

any further information that you want to share with us, please send it on to us after the meeting.

3.39 p.m.

**Papurau i'w Nodi**  
**Papers to Note**

[259] **Darren Millar:** There are a few papers to note: a response from the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board to the evidence given by Dr Jean Matthes, Welsh ambulance service data on transfers as part of our inquiry into neonatal services, and the minutes of our previous meeting. That brings us to the end of today's meeting. Our next meeting is on Thursday, 13 May at 12.45 p.m..

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 3.40 p.m.*  
*The meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.*