

Adult Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS)

ANNUAL REPORT
2023-24 & 2024-25



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The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) places adult safeguarding on a statutory footing and sets out a strong partnership approach to ensuring adults with care and support needs are protected from harm. The Local Authority Safeguarding duties are detailed in the SSWBA (Part 7) and supported by statutory guidance and National Safeguarding Procedures.

<https://safeguarding.wales/en/>

To further strengthen safeguarding arrangements in Wales, SSWBA established a National Independent Safeguarding Board and six Regional Safeguarding Boards. Carmarthenshire County Council is a partner of the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board.

1. National Independent Safeguarding Board

The National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISB) is now well established and continues to work closely with Welsh Government and the six Regional Safeguarding Boards. It has three primary functions:

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

Please see below link to the National Independent Safeguarding Board website which includes the 2023-24 annual report and associated workplans.

[Home - Safeguarding Board Wales](#)

2. Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board

The Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board (RSB) has been operational since 2016 and replaced local safeguarding boards. The statutory functions of the board are carried out by Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys Local Authorities, Dyfed Powys Police, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Powys Teaching Health Board, Public Health Wales and the Probation Service (Wales). The board may also include other persons or bodies that it considers should be represented and who are involved in or have activities or functions relating to children or adults in its area.

The Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board has two distinct workstreams, one for children (CYSUR) and one for adults (CWMPAS). Both are overseen by a combined regional board which meets on a quarterly basis.

The board is well established and well regarded nationally. It has robust governance arrangements in place supported by a very effective business unit. It continues to facilitate successful multi agency working arrangements which often results in improved and consistent safeguarding practices across the region. Carmarthenshire's

Director of Communities is chair of the Regional Safeguarding Board and takes a proactive role in ensuring it fulfils its statutory obligations. Under his leadership, the board maintains a clear focus on the needs and experiences of children and adults requiring statutory support.

In responding to the needs of children and adults at risk within the Mid and West Wales region, the board monitors regional compliance with national legislation and policy, facilitates Child and Adult Practice reviews (now known as Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews in Wales) and any associated learning and improvement activity. It facilitates regional training events and shares national, regional and local good practice. Leaders and front-line practitioners in Carmarthenshire County Council make a significant contribution to the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board and take a lead or active role in all its associated subgroups and workstreams.

In addition, Carmarthenshire is leading on the Safeguarding Linc project which is an exciting regional project aimed at effectively sharing information across partner organisations to support Safeguarding discussions. Initially the project will be focused on Children on the Child Protection Register but will develop to include adults in the near future. There are 4 main organisations involved in the first phase: Dyfed Powys Police, Carmarthenshire County Council, Pembrokeshire County Council and Hywel Dda University Health Board. The project team will be working with Swansea University through their SeRP (Secure eResearch Platform) to build and host the regional data. Initial funding for this work has been provided by WLGA .

Please see below link to the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board Website which includes published practice reviews and the 2023-24 Regional Board report.

[Cysur | Mid & West Wales Safeguarding Board Safeguarding children & adults](#)

3. Carmarthenshire Corporate Safeguarding

‘Corporate Safeguarding’ within Councils, describes both the policy commitment that a Council makes and the arrangements it has in place, to ensure that all of its Directorates and employees play their part in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children and adults who may be at risk of harm.

(WLGA- Corporate Safeguarding Good Practice Guidance)

Carmarthenshire council recognises the importance of having effective corporate safeguarding arrangements in place and has long established systems for regular oversight. In Autumn 2023, Wales Audit Office concluded a follow up review (from 2015) of the Corporate Safeguarding arrangements in place in Carmarthenshire council and given the passage of time it identified areas requiring additional attention. An action plan was promptly developed and areas of focus addressed throughout 2024. Examples of the work undertaken includes mandatory safeguarding training, a programme of safeguarding audits, refreshed policies and a strengthened governance structure.

Carmarthenshire Local Operational Group (CLOG)

The well-established Carmarthenshire Local Operational Group (CLOG) further evidences the continued commitment of all local agencies to work together to improve safeguarding arrangements within the county. It focuses on achieving the best outcomes for children and adults at risk by improving joint working practices and seeking solutions to multi agency operational challenges. It is responsible for undertaking multi agency audits, identifying and maintaining oversight of Carmarthenshire Child and Adult Practice Reviews (now known as Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews- SUSR in Wales) and any associated learning. The group meets on a quarterly basis and is jointly chaired by the Heads of Children and Adult services which confirms its importance.

Carmarthenshire Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Local Operational group

Carmarthenshire established its VAWDASV LOG in 2024 to ensure a coordinated approach to tackling all forms of domestic abuse and providing support to survivors. The group will focus on developing a local delivery plan which will support the regional VAWDASV strategy. [Cysur | Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(VAWDASV\) Strategy for Mid and West Wales](#)

A link to Carmarthenshire Annual Corporate Safeguarding report can be found below.

[Annual Report.pdf](#)

4. Adult Safeguarding- Carmarthenshire

The national, regional and corporate arrangements continue to support and strengthen Carmarthenshire's ongoing commitment to safeguarding its citizens from abuse or neglect.

The scope of adult safeguarding duties and responsibilities is evolving. In addition to fulfilling the local authority statutory safeguarding duties set out in Part 7 of the SSWBA, the Adult Safeguarding team play an active role in managing or contributing to several Multi- Agency Safeguarding systems. This includes the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) relating to high risk domestic abuse victims. These meetings have been extended to include Modern Day Slavery victims and those at risk of so called "Honour Based Violence". The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the victim, and any children or adults at risk. The team also participate in the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) meetings in relation to individuals who present a risk to the public.

The safeguarding team co-ordinate arrangements to support individuals displaying High Risk Behaviours including self-neglect which involves multi-agency information sharing and risk management. In February 2023 the team implemented the regional rapid response procedures to suspected suicide which is now embedded into safeguarding arrangements. This approach ensures a prompt offer of support to those who have been affected by or may be at risk of harm following a recent suspected suicide death. This approach continues to be regularly evaluated.

Effective safeguarding systems are those where all agencies work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for those at-risk including sharing relevant and timely information. The adult safeguarding team work closely with all statutory partner agencies including Dyfed Powys Police and Hywel Dda University Health Board, as well as numerous other organisations to ensure the most appropriate safeguarding action is taken by the right people, at the right time.

Carmarthenshire Adult Safeguarding team contribute significantly to work

5. The Adult Safeguarding and DoLS Team

The Adult Safeguarding team is overseen by a Senior Manager with strategic safeguarding responsibilities, including Carmarthenshire's Adult Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), Carmarthenshire's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements and Carmarthenshire's statutory Channel arrangements, which are part of the UK Prevent Strategy (ensuring early multi agency support for individuals susceptible to being drawn into terrorism). The postholder has line management responsibility for the Operational Safeguarding and DoLS team manager and the Mid and West Wales Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Regional Advisor who holds a large work portfolio. The Senior Manager reports directly to the Head of Adult Social Care.

The Adult Safeguarding and DoLS Team Manager has responsibility for ensuring effective operational delivery of the statutory Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards duties. This includes management of the operational teams and all quality assurance functions.

The Adult Safeguarding and DoLS team are relatively small and have been affected by extended staff absences and periodic vacancies since mid-2023. In July 2024, the safeguarding operational team commenced the pilot of an alternative staffing structure to ensure greater resilience. The structure converted an existing vacancy into two new Safeguarding Duty Support Officers, assisting the qualified Social Workers by screening initial safeguarding reports, gathering additional information and liaising with the report maker. This approach will be evaluated in Spring 2025.

The Social workers within the safeguarding team continue to complete statutory safeguarding enquiries as per SSWBA (s126), extended enquiries and investigations where appropriate, including those relating to commissioned services and Persons in a Position of Trust.

The DoLS team also amended its structure in 2024 by converting an existing vacancy into a DoLS Quality Assurance post. The postholder will ensure that all DoLS applications are allocated and returned in a timely manner and meet the required quality assurance standards. They work closely with Care homes in Carmarthenshire to ensure the conditions set with DoLS authorisations are met and appropriate advocacy arrangements in place. This pilot structure will be reviewed in Summer 2025.

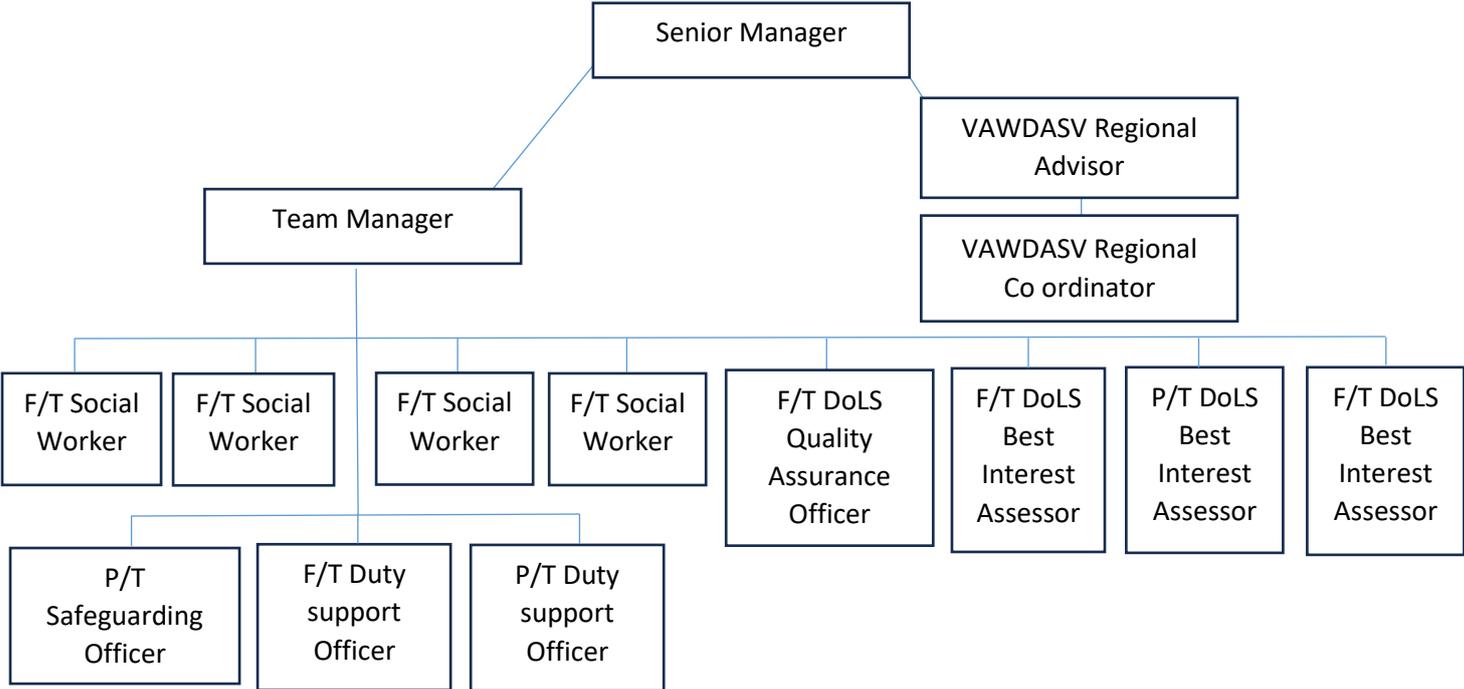
The DoLS team, comprises of three experienced Best Interest Assessors (Social Work Qualified) all of whom are fluent Welsh speakers. The use of the Welsh language is extremely important in the context of these assessments as it is essential to fully understand the persons views and wishes regarding care and accommodation and

critical in the assessment of mental capacity. The assessor’s role is to determine whether any existing or planned deprivation of liberty is in the detained persons best interest, necessary to prevent harm and is a proportionate response to the likelihood and seriousness of that harm.

The safeguarding and DoLS team members continue to undertake regular training appropriate to their roles and routinely apply the learning to practice. This includes the social work practice educator training which has enabled the team to support three social work students during this reporting period.

The Senior Manager holds regular service development days where the team actively contribute to the analysis of team performance and the identification of service improvements. This continuous improvement approach evidences a shared commitment within the team to achieving good outcomes for adults at risk and other vulnerable citizens, delivering excellent service standards and ensuring ongoing compliance with statutory duties.

Safeguarding/DoLS Team Structure



6. Person Centred Safeguarding

As previously reported, the SSWBA and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures support a shift in practice which focuses on the views, wishes and feelings of the person at risk which is the obvious starting point for any safeguarding intervention.

The safeguarding team, together with support from other professionals take a proactive role in visiting and speaking directly with the adult at risk to gain a clear understanding of the situation and the risks from their perspective. It is important to

ensure that individuals are an equal partner in their relationship with professionals. Solutions are based on the desired outcomes of the person wherever possible and supported by the professionals involved.

Adult safeguarding continues to be a challenging area of work as there is a fine balance between intervening to manage perceived risks and respecting the right of an adult to make unwise decisions. Applying the principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) is a fundamental part of safeguarding interventions with adults and the involvement of independent advocacy is a key consideration.

7. Audits/Inspections

Regular audits and inspections are an integral part of the safeguarding team quality assurance mechanisms. In addition to independent internal and external scrutiny, the team routinely review their own systems, processes, decision making and outcomes to ensure standards remain high.

The audits are undertaken in a variety of ways including, self-audits, peer audits and management audits. They are discussed constructively in team meetings and supervisions to ensure improvement opportunities and areas of inconsistency are identified and addressed.

The safeguarding team work closely with internal and external colleagues across all departments within Carmarthenshire council. The team work particularly closely with contracting and commissioning colleagues, exchanging information, and responding to concerns in relation to commissioned services, e.g. residential care homes. Both teams report the benefits and constructive nature of this close working arrangement. For continuity one dedicated safeguarding officer focuses entirely on concerns raised about service providers which ensures early identification of patterns or trends which are addressed collaboratively with service providers, commissioners, Care Inspectorate Wales, and other appropriate agencies.

8. Adult Protection Support Orders (APSO)

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 introduced Adult Protection Support Orders which enable an authorised officer (and anyone else named in the order) to speak with an adult suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect in private if this is being prevented by another person. The purpose is to establish whether the person is making decisions freely, to assess if they are a person at risk and establish if any action should be taken.

Carmarthenshire County Council has not felt it appropriate to apply for an Adult Protection Support order during this reporting period.

9. Adult Practice Reviews (APR) - known as Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSR) from March 2025,

In accordance with the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014, the Regional Safeguarding Board must arrange for an APR/ to be held where abuse or neglect of an adult is known or suspected, and the adult has:

- died
- sustained potentially life-threatening injury or
- sustained serious and permanent impairment of health

The purpose of the review is to identify any learning or improvement opportunities for future inter-agency adult protection practice. A learning event will be facilitated by the Regional Safeguarding Board and attended by the professionals who were involved with the adult and their family.

The Regional Safeguarding Board completed one Carmarthenshire Adult Practice Review during this reporting period. The report has been published on the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board website and the Carmarthenshire Local Operational Group will ensure the associated action plan is progressed.

10. Multi Agency Professional Forum (MAPF)

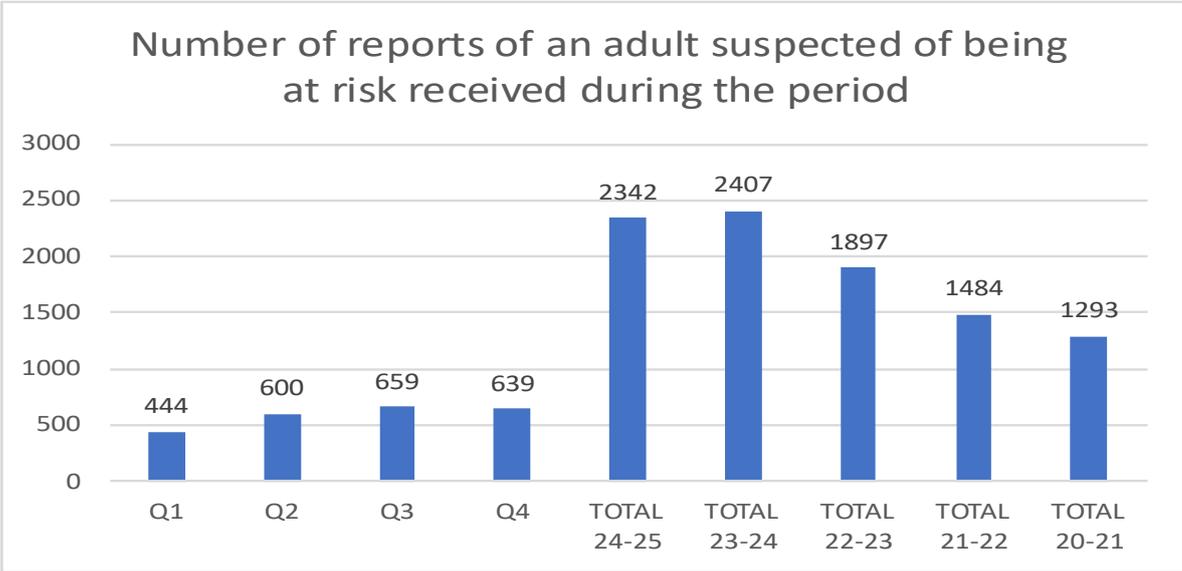
A Multi Agency Professional Forum can be held when the circumstances do not meet the criteria for an Adult Practice Review but learning opportunities have been identified. The MAPF is another mechanism for identifying organisational learning, improving the quality of work with families, and strengthening the ability of services to keep people as safe as possible. Carmarthenshire County Council has completed one MAPF and is currently reviewing two interventions to identify thematic learning.

11. Adult Safeguarding Performance Data

Adult Safeguarding performance measures are set by and reported to Welsh Government on an annual basis and additional performance measures are reported to the Regional Safeguarding Board quarterly. This data is analysed to better understand any changes in demand, patterns and trends which is used to influence and challenge current practices and inform future protection and prevention strategies. Achieving a consistent interpretation of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and the Adult Safeguarding performance measures has been a challenge. Carmarthenshire council is leading a piece of work commissioned by the National Independent Safeguarding Board in collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University to review the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and ensure the data captured is accurate, meaningful, and comparable. This work will be completed by the end of 2025.

The performance information provided to Welsh Government and the Regional Safeguarding Board is extracted from the Local Authority Management Information System. The key performance measures are illustrated below.

Number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk.



The Social services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 placed a **duty** on ‘relevant partner agencies’ to report to the local authority any adult or child, including unborn children, they suspect is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect. There is also an expectation on **all** agencies and organisations to report safeguarding concerns to the local authority.

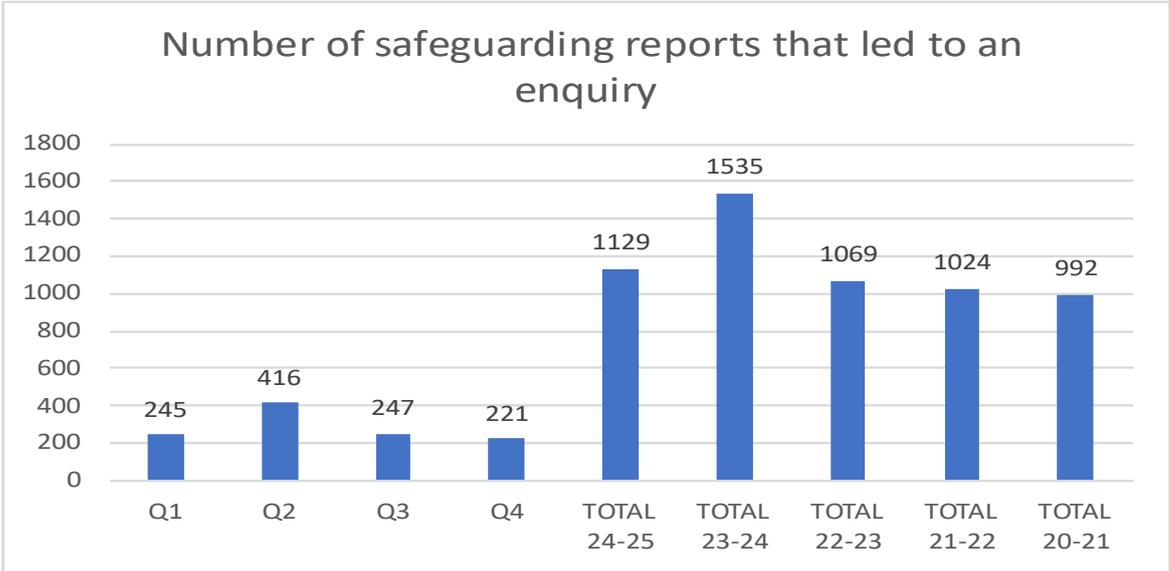
The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 defines an adult at risk as a person who is:

- experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect;
- has needs for care and support; and
- as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it

The total number of adult safeguarding reports received has been increasing on an annual basis, however, in 2024/25 the number of reports declined marginally. The number of reports received is consistent with regional trends (2024/25 data has not yet been compared).

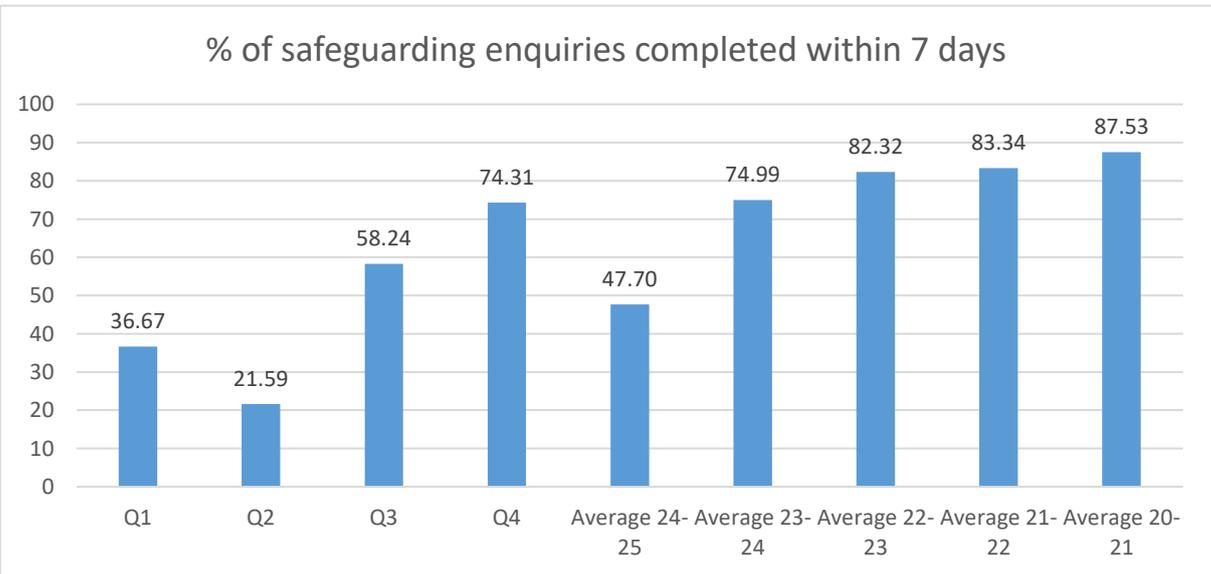
The roll out of National, Regional and local safeguarding training has emphasised the legal duty to report and is a likely contributor to the annual increases. Early indications suggest that the small decrease in numbers reported for 2024/25 is due to a more proactive approach to redirecting reports that do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention.

Number of safeguarding reports that led to an enquiry (s126)



When the local authority receives a safeguarding report, it must determine whether there is reasonable cause to suspect the adult is or may be at risk of abuse or neglect. If there is reasonable cause to suspect, the local authority has a legal duty to make safeguarding enquiries as set out in section 126 of the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014. The primary reasons for a report not to proceed to an enquiry is when the initial identified risk has been removed or managed or the adult refuses to engage in the enquiry.

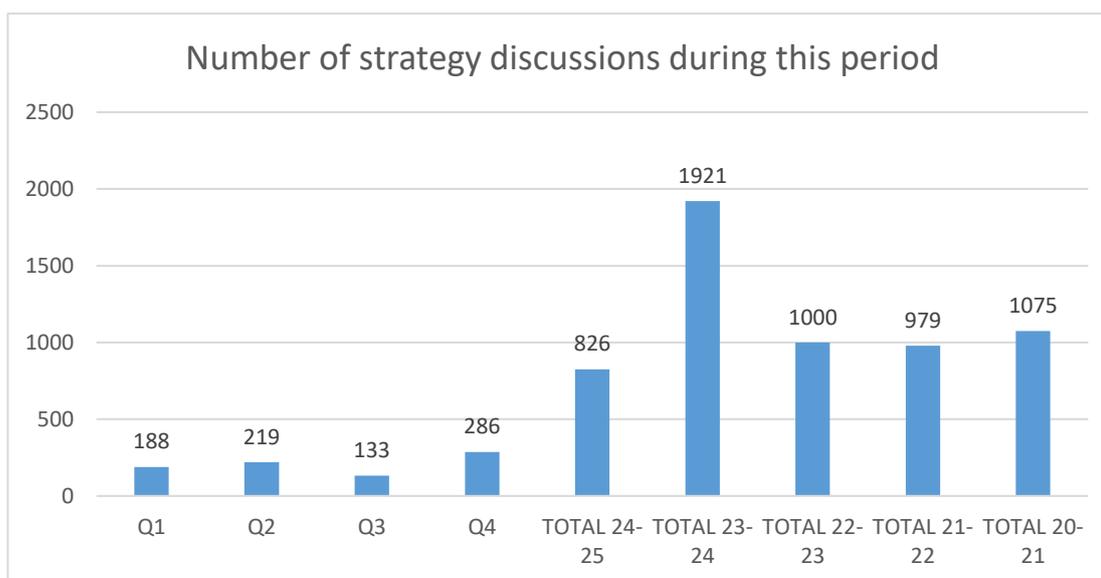
Safeguarding enquiries (s126) completed within 7 days.



Statutory safeguarding guidance states that ***“safeguarding enquiries should normally be undertaken within 7 days; however, they should not be rushed”***.

The number of enquiries completed within 7 days has continued to decrease since 2020. Several factors contribute to the length of time enquiries take, e.g complexity of the situation, difficulty engaging with the individual, or awaiting assistance or support from another agency. The local authority can delegate statutory enquiries to the most appropriate agency or practitioner, but it must monitor progress and timescales however, the time taken to complete the enquiries is sometimes outside the control of the local authority. A rationale is recorded for enquiries which extend the 7-day period. All safeguarding reports are screened and prioritised within 1 working day and enquiries are commenced promptly. As previously discussed, Carmarthenshire is leading on regional work with Liverpool John Moores University which includes analysing safeguarding enquiries and the expected timescales. It is also evident that staff absences have impacted our ability to complete enquiries within the recommended 7 days.

Strategy Discussions



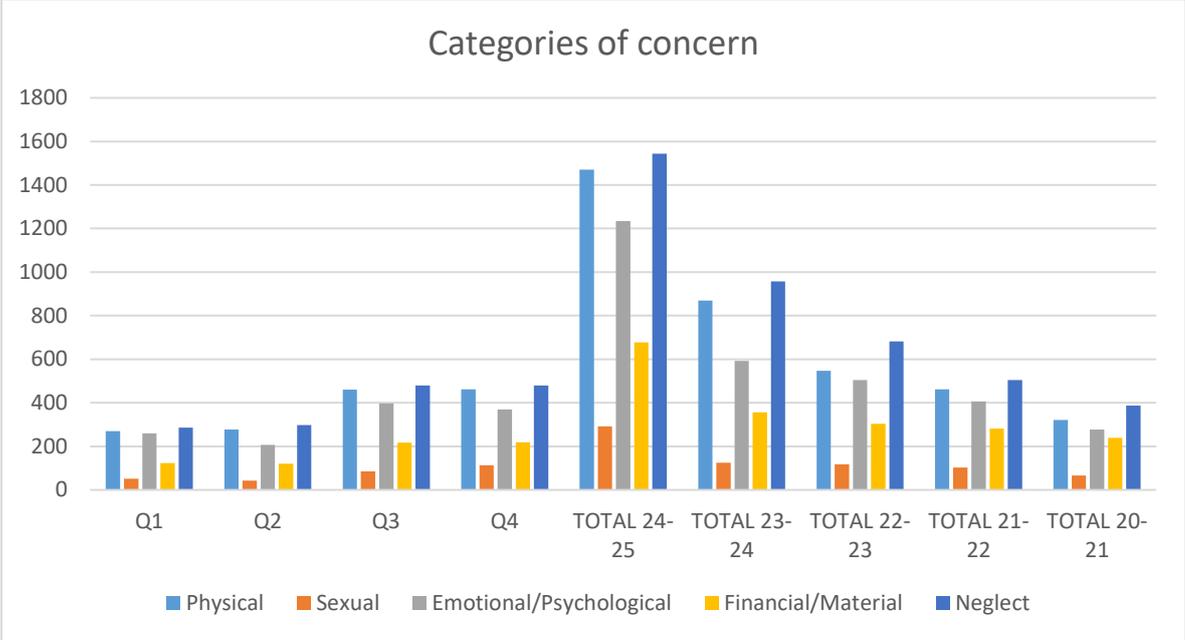
When a safeguarding report is received, it is sometimes necessary to share the concern with another agency or organisation. These discussions take place to consider the level of risk, identify immediate safeguarding actions and consider whether collaborative action is required. Not all safeguarding reports require the involvement of other agencies, e.g. if the concern does not relate to a criminal matter, it will not be discussed with the Police. The number of strategy discussions held is therefore dependent on the nature of the concern and the agencies needing to be involved.

Strategy meetings are normally held when the involvement of another agency is required or when subsequent or ongoing action is required to manage risks. Carmarthenshire has excellent working relationships with partner agencies and has well established processes for communication and joint planning.

The number of strategy discussions held is not indicative of good or poor performance. The data for this indicator is captured upon closure of the intervention therefore, actual activity may be included in a future reporting data period.

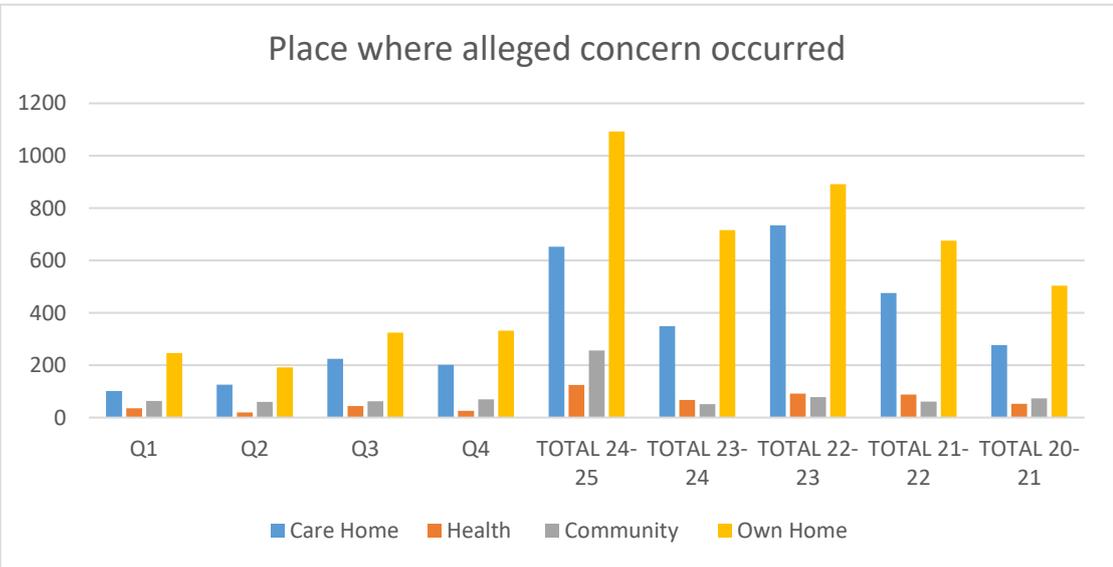
The use of remote meeting facilities initiated during the pandemic continues to significantly improve attendance at strategy discussions and meetings.

Categories of concern



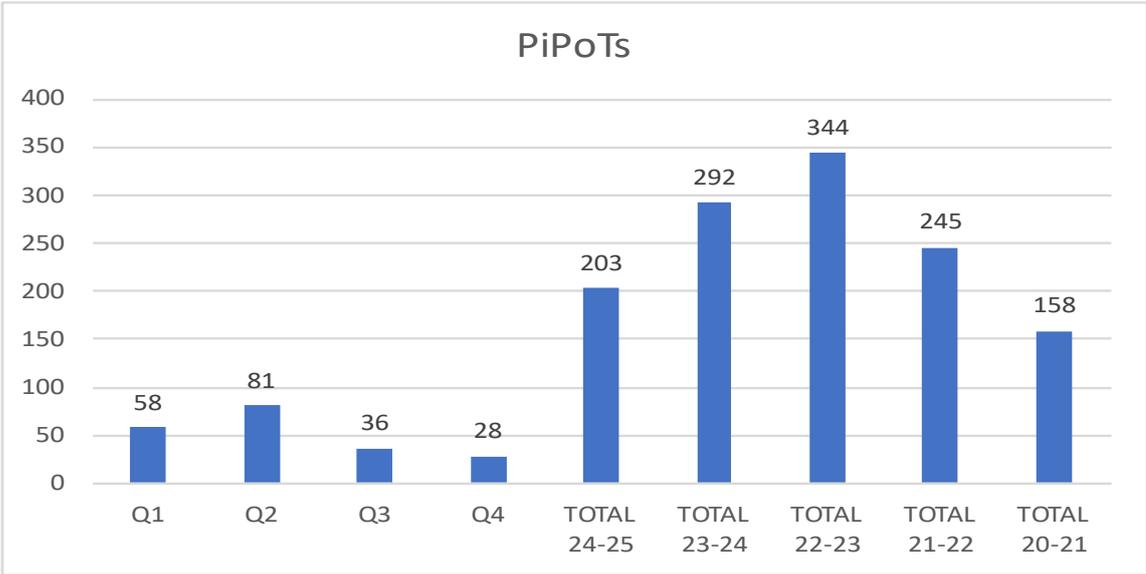
Neglect remains the highest category of concern reported. This is due mainly to its broad definition. The data shows that whilst the volume of reports has mainly increased over the past five years, the type of concerns reported has remained consistent.

Place where alleged concern occurred



A person’s own home remains highest in relation to the place where the alleged concern occurred, followed by Care Homes. These trends are anticipated due to the large volume of care delivered in these settings. Practitioners working in these environments are familiar with their duty to report concerns to the local authority and do so appropriately. Many of the concerns reported do not amount to abuse or neglect and are often low-level incidents requiring an alternative solution (e.g. a one-off incident of a carer late for a home care visit). The high number of reports for these settings is evidence of a proactive approach to reporting to the local authority as required by law.

Number of reports relating to Persons in a Position of Trust (PiPOT)



As part of its safeguarding duties, Local Authorities must respond to concerns raised about those whose work, either in a paid or voluntary capacity, brings them into contact with children or adults at risk.

Safeguarding procedures should be initiated in all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children or adults at risk has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or adult at risk
- May have committed a criminal offence against a child or adult at risk or that has a direct impact on the child or adult at risk
- Behaved towards a child, children or adults at risk in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with both children and adults

Ongoing awareness raising in relation to the duty to report concerns about Persons in a Position of Trust has contributed to the increased numbers in recent years. This has also been exacerbated by a lack of clarity within the Wales Safeguarding Procedures resulting in some confusion as to whom and when the procedures apply. Carmarthenshire has worked closely with the Wales National Procedures Board and

the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board to review this section of the procedures to achieve greater clarity and consistency. A review of thresholds locally has meant that inappropriate reports are redirected back to employers to manage.

12. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees the right to liberty and security.

The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) are important human rights safeguards. Care homes and hospitals should apply them where a person aged 18 or over does not have the mental capacity to consent to their care and accommodation arrangements, and they need to be deprived of their liberty. A person is deemed to be deprived of liberty if they are under continuous supervision and control and not allowed to leave the place where they are being cared for. If the arrangements in place to keep a person safe are considered to be in their best interest, they must be scrutinised and authorised “in accordance with a procedure set out by law”.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005, and DoLS Code of Practice set out how Local Authorities and Health Boards in Wales must satisfy themselves that the deprivation of liberty is necessary, proportionate, least restrictive and in the person’s best interest. They must also ensure that the person has an appropriate advocate who can act on their behalf and challenge the lawfulness of their detention before a court.

In March 2014, a Supreme Court judgment (P v Cheshire West and Chester Council) effectively lowered the threshold for the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. The new threshold meant that a significantly increased number of individuals living in residential homes, nursing homes and hospitals became eligible for the safeguards. The Local authority has the statutory responsibility for arranging the DoLS assessments in Care Homes and authorising the Deprivation of Liberty if appropriate. The assessments must be carried out by appropriately qualified practitioners, one of which must be a section 12 approved doctor.

The impact of the Supreme Court judgement triggered a sharp rise in demand for DoLS authorisations, and without additional resources resulted in an accrual of requests and an increased risk of individuals deprived of liberty without the protection of the law. This situation was replicated across almost all local authorities in Wales and England. Managing the demand for DoLS authorisations has been a significant challenge since the judgement.

The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) have since been deemed “not fit for purpose” due in part to being overly complex and bureaucratic, ineffectively implemented, and resource intensive which is evident in the requirement to reassess individuals on an annual basis when it is unlikely that their circumstances will change.

Considering this, the DoLS arrangements were scheduled to be replaced by new legislation and renamed the **Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)**. In preparation for this change Welsh Government provided local authorities and Health Boards with significant funding to address the backlog of applications. The initial date for introducing the LPS was October 2020 but this was paused due to the coronavirus pandemic. On 5th April 2023 the government announced its intention to cease the implementation of LPS with the following statement:

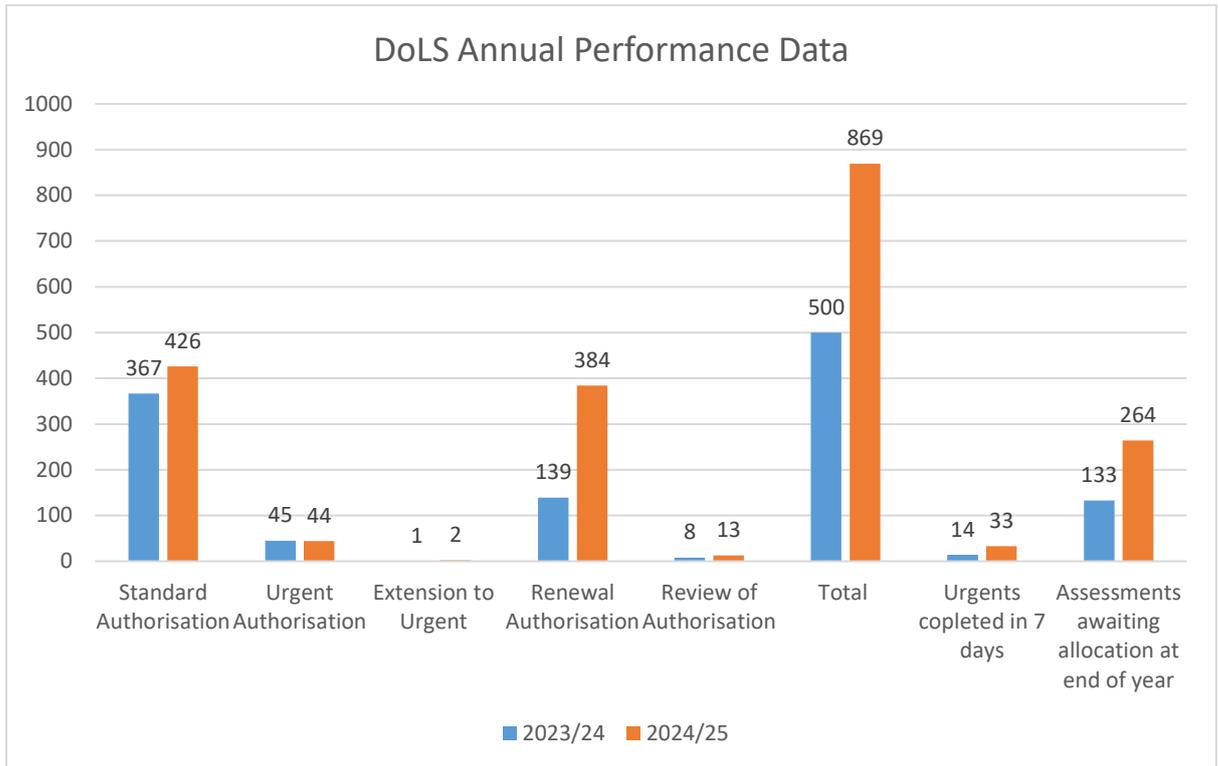
“The UK Government has announced their intention to step away from the introduction of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (the LPS) and the implementation of the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 (the 2019 Act). UK Government has confirmed that the necessary legislation to implement the LPS will not be brought forward within this Parliament”.

13. Regional DoLS Forum

Carmarthenshire established the Mid and West Wales Regional DoLS Forum in 2017. This forum includes Carmarthenshire, Powys, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire County Council and Hywel Dda University Health Board and Powys Teaching Health Board. The partners ensure high standards and consistency in the application of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards regionally.

With a reduction in funding and an absence of further national progress on updating the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, many local authorities and Health Boards are considering ways of improving its application locally or regionally. The Mid and West Wales Regional DoLS Forum, has developed a less complex, well thought out approach to DoLS which is lawful and proportionate, and ensures the person deprived of liberty remains central to decision making. Carmarthenshire council is piloting the new approach which allows the utilisation of existing assessments more than once and proportionately thereafter. The pilot is proving to be highly effective and will be fully evaluated in Summer 2025.

DoLS Annual Performance Data



There are five types of DoLS authorisation requested by Care homes.

1. Standard Authorisation – To be completed within 21 days
2. Urgent Authorisation – To be completed within 5 days
3. Extension to an urgent authorisation- To be completed within 5 days
4. Renewal Authorisation – To be completed within 21 days
5. Review of Authorisation – To be completed within 21 days

The DoLS performance data above evidences the volume and type of authorisations requested. The increased number of renewal authorisation requests received is due to the proactive approach of the DoLS team and Care home managers. There has been a concerted effort to ensure renewal applications are received in a timely manner (i.e. in advance of their expiry date). The large number of authorisations completed in 2024/25 is evidence of the new proportionate approach currently being piloted in Carmarthenshire.