



Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children

City of Cardiff Council

Audit year: 2014-15

Issued: October 2014

Document reference: 330A2014

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The team who delivered the work comprised Steve Blundell.

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Summary report

Background

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

Review findings and conclusions

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

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

7. The recently created Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Local Safeguarding Children Board provides the overview for safeguarding in the city. The Council's Corporate Plan sets a range of key actions for its Children's Social Services to continue to develop and strengthen the role and responsibilities of the Council's safeguarding and corporate parenting. The Council has a local Child Protection Policy that outlines the key principals of child protection in the city. The Council takes account of the equalities act when developing its policies and procedures, for example, 'Cardiff What Matters' has equalities built into the process.
8. We found that at the time of our review, the Council was undergoing significant management change with 12 new senior managers recently taking up post, including a new chief executive, director of social services, director of education and monitoring officer. There is consequently a major change in management responsibilities, organisational structure and culture taking place.
9. Welsh Government guidance 'Safeguarding Children: Working together under the Children Act 2004' sets out that local authorities should identify a named senior officer with responsibility for promoting safeguarding throughout the organisation. At the time of our review, it was not clear who in the Council had been given this role. This lack of clarity is echoed by our survey, which found that a significantly lower proportion of respondents than the survey average stated they know who the Council's Designated Officer for child protection is: 29 per cent compared with 67 per cent. However, we are aware that the Council is planning to create a Designated Officer post in Education to comply with new Welsh Government guidance on 'Safeguarding in Education'.

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10. Similarly with regard to clarity of member roles, fewer respondents in Cardiff know who the Council's lead Councillor for child protection is as compared to the Wales average: 26 per cent compared with our survey average of 44 per cent. Clearly identifying who key officers and members are and promoting full awareness throughout the Council is key to ensuring a sustained focus on safeguarding. This highlights that the Council needs to undertake significant work to strengthen leadership and accountability for safeguarding.
 11. The Council has a comprehensive risk management approach to support how it meets its children safeguarding responsibilities. There is a risk management strategy and a corporate risk management group with responsibility for overseeing the Council's risk management work. However, awareness amongst managers on how risk management operates varied widely and some staff we interviewed were unclear how departmental and corporate risks were monitored and reviewed. The risk register identifies a 'Potential for mismatch between children's needs and capacity to meet them if current trends continue, for example in children needing to be safeguarded, looked after and/or receive other services to support families and carers to care for them'. This does not, however, identify safeguarding children as a specific risk for the Council.

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

12. At the time of our review, the Council was in the process of developing new systems for governance and scrutiny of safeguarding but these had not yet become fully embedded. The Council's safeguarding arrangements are subject to planned work by Scrutiny, although this is related to the wider children services agenda rather than testing corporate safeguarding arrangements. We were informed that a significant role of the new operational manager safeguarding will focus on developing an independent Council-wide safeguarding function, designed to provide a source of advice, support and independent challenge to safeguarding practice. At the time of our assessment, however, these arrangements were not in place.
13. The Council has identified what information it needs to monitor and evaluate to determine if its children's safeguarding arrangements are working effectively and is in the process of creating new systems to monitor, evaluate and challenge information and performance. The Council has timeframes for monitoring and reviewing information and performance related to children's safeguarding. Most reporting is undertaken quarterly, although some specific information is reported weekly and high-profile information reported daily. The recent peer review identified a series of weaknesses in current performance management arrangements, which the Council is addressing.

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14. The Council has systems for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers. The Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure sets out the key principles which the Council intends to follow in relation to all recruitment and selection activity, and outlines the responsibilities of elected members and officers. The policy applies to the recruitment and selection of all Council employees, and is commended to governing bodies for implementation in relation to recruitment of schools-based employees. Human Resources has a recruitment team, that undertakes the recruitment process from advert to contract and oversee the appointment, deployment, and management of the process with schools.
 15. However, we found that respondents in Cardiff were significantly less aware of how their role/job contributes to safeguarding and protecting children and young people than the survey average: 70 per cent compared with the Welsh survey average of 95 per cent. Likewise, fewer respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children and young people were explained when they started in their role than the survey average: 39 per cent in Cardiff compared with our survey average of 75 per cent.
 16. The Council is taking steps to assure itself that members and staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding. Children services staff receive relevant training and training is provided to schools on a rolling annual programme. During 2013-14, the Social Care Training Centre delivered 46 individual training events in relation to Safeguarding Children, including a comprehensive training programme delivered on behalf of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Attendees primarily came from children's services – 78.93 per cent (341 attendees) – and Health and Social Care – 15.79 per cent (151 attendees) – and the rest from other Council services and partners.
 17. However, not all those who would benefit from this training have received it and the Council needs to ensure all those outside of education and social care who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive this training. A series of learning events for elected members on specific aspects of safeguarding children have been provided on a monthly basis since November 2013. To date, 37 attendances have been recorded at these evening briefing events. Because this training is not mandatory, attendance has been low.
 18. Our survey found that the Council is well below the survey average for the number of people who have received training on safeguarding in the last six months – 12 per cent compared with 32 per cent – and has significantly more people who have never received safeguarding training: 29 per cent in the Council compared with our all-Wales survey average of 10 per cent.

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

19. The Council has an internal audit plan, but has not identified and agreed how it will use this resource to provide assurance on its corporate safeguarding arrangements. Some specific audit work is undertaken within children services relating to child protection and whilst there is regular reporting to Scrutiny of children services performance that includes a section on safeguarding, this is limited to performance relating to child protection and assessment and does not address broader safeguarding issues or give an overall assurance on safeguarding arrangements.
20. The Council is in the process of establishing an enhanced scrutiny role with independent reviewing officers and independent chairs. The Council has taken steps to assure itself that it complies with data protection requirements in relation to children. For example, the Director of Children Services is Caldicott Guardian¹ for the Council.
21. Our survey found that far fewer respondents feel that the Council deals effectively with specific incidents concerning safeguarding and protecting children and young people: 51 per cent compared with a Welsh average of 82 per cent. Similarly, a significantly lower proportion than the survey average strongly agreed or agreed that the Council informs all parents how their children are safeguarded and protected when using Council services and schools: 32 per cent compared with 55 per cent.

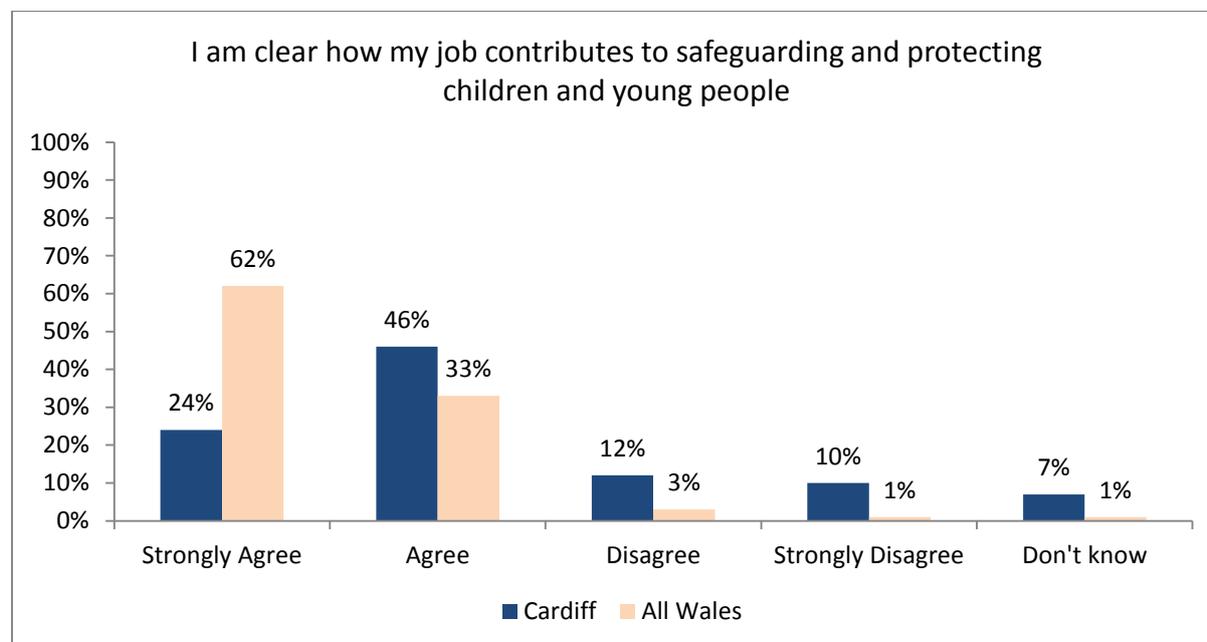
Proposals for improvement

P1	Ensure the Council develops effective arrangements to monitor, evaluate and challenge information and performance of safeguarding.
P2	The Council should clarify who designated officers with responsibility for safeguarding are.
P3	Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that corporate arrangements are working effectively.
P4	Improve the work of the Council's scrutiny committees to ensure it is providing assurance on the effectiveness of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements.
P5	Ensure all elected members and staff who encounter children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.
P6	Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding across the Council.

¹ A Caldicott Guardian is a senior person responsible for protecting the confidentiality of patient and service-user information and enabling appropriate information-sharing.

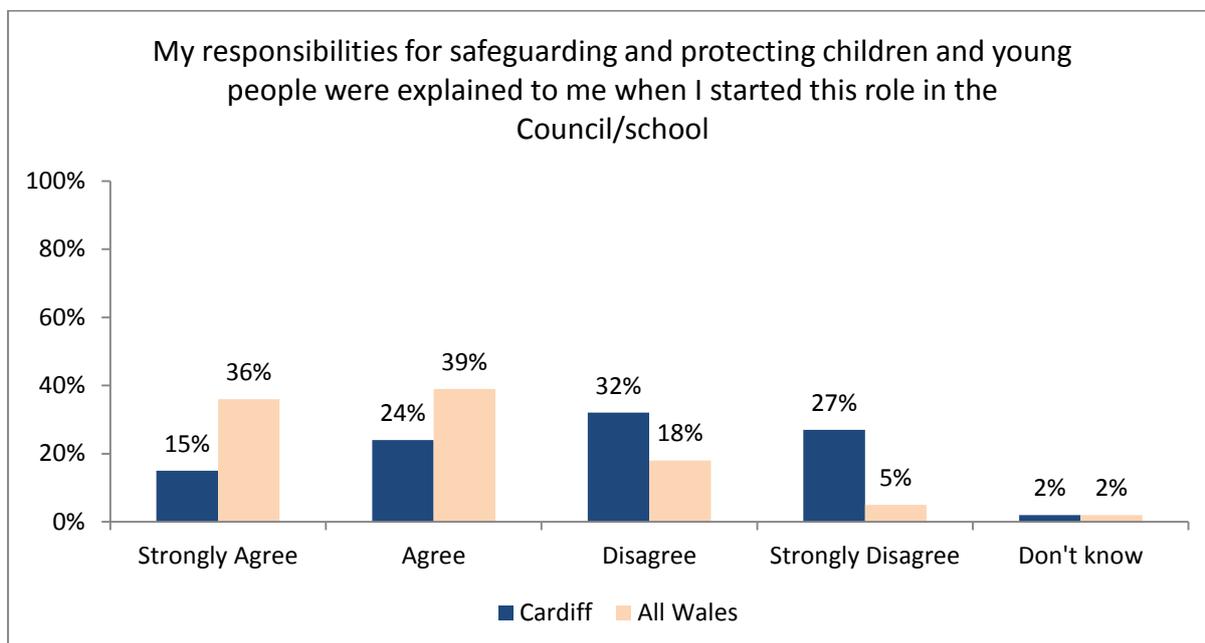
Appendix 1

Summary of survey findings



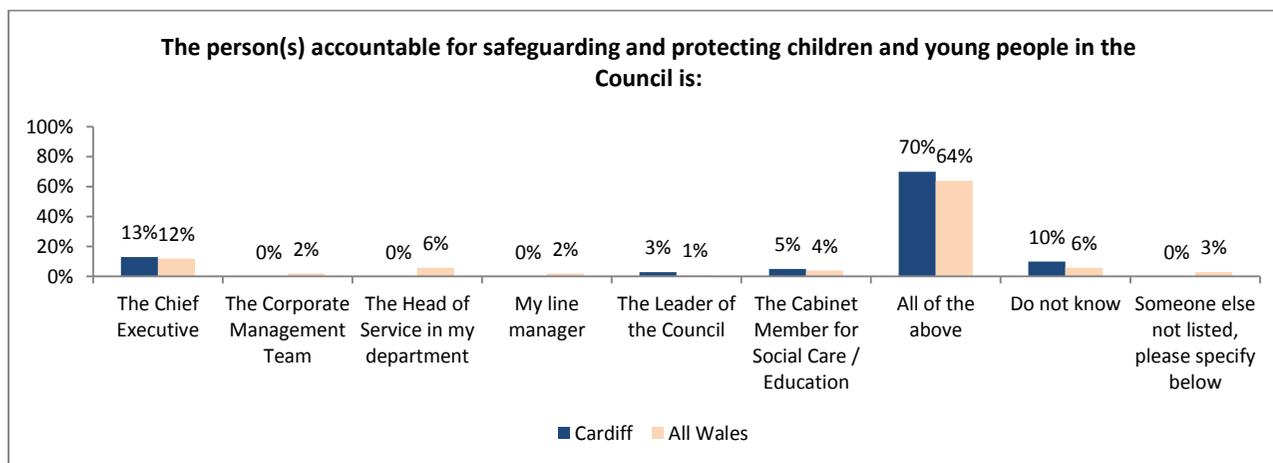
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cardiff	41	-	-	10	19	5	4	3
Expressed opinion*				24%	46%	12%	10%	7%
All Wales	1,996	-	6	1,235	664	53	12	26
Expressed opinion*				62%	33%	3%	1%	1%

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



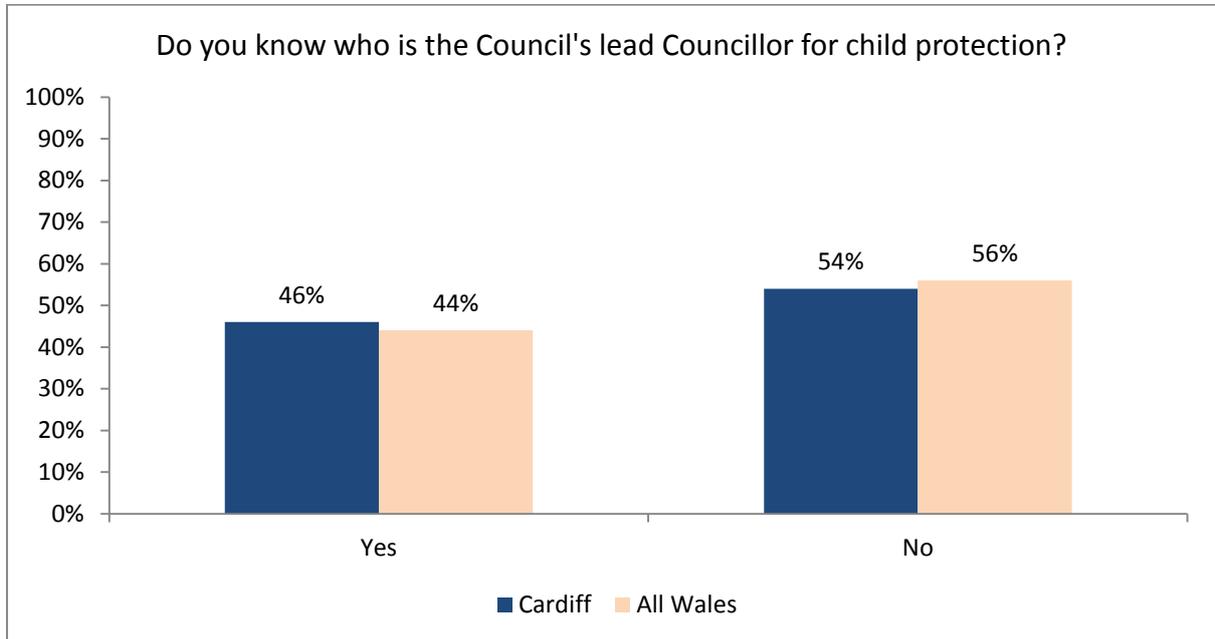
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Cardiff	41	-	-	12	29
Expressed opinion*				29%	71%
All Wales	1,996	-	13	1,337	646
Expressed opinion*				67%	33%

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



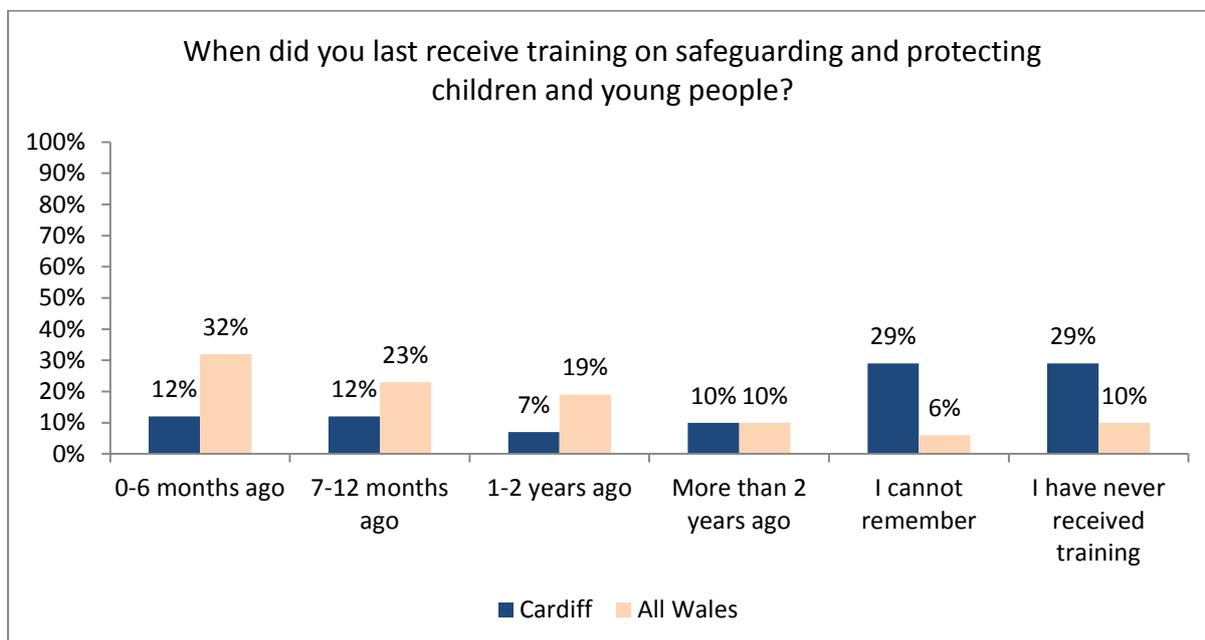
	Total	Not asked	No reply	The Chief Executive	The Corporate Management Team	The Head of Service in my department	My line manager	The Leader of the Council	The Cabinet Member for Social Care/ Education	All of the above	Do not know	Someone else not listed, please specify below
Cardiff	41	-	1	5	-	-	-	1	2	28	4	-
Expressed opinion*				13%				3%	5%	70%	10%	
All Wales	1,996	-	68	223	34	124	47	19	69	1,231	115	66
Expressed opinion*				12%	2%	6%	2%	1%	4%	64%	6%	3%

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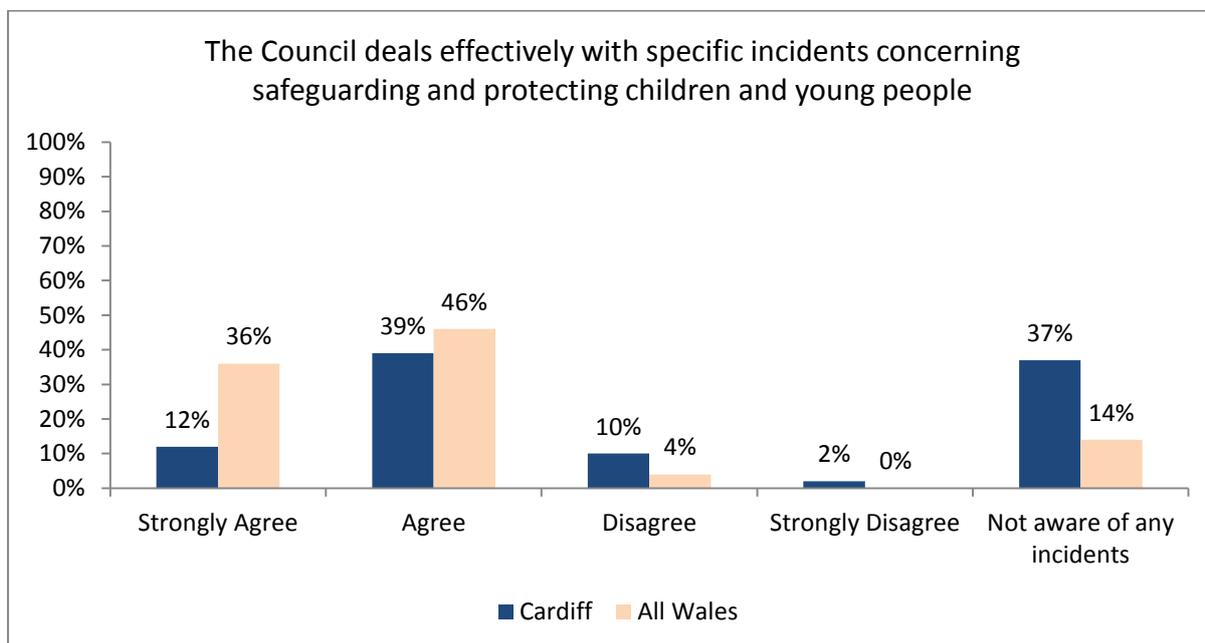
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Cardiff	41	-	-	19	22
Expressed opinion*				46%	54%
All Wales	1,996	-	13	881	1,102
Expressed opinion*				44%	56%

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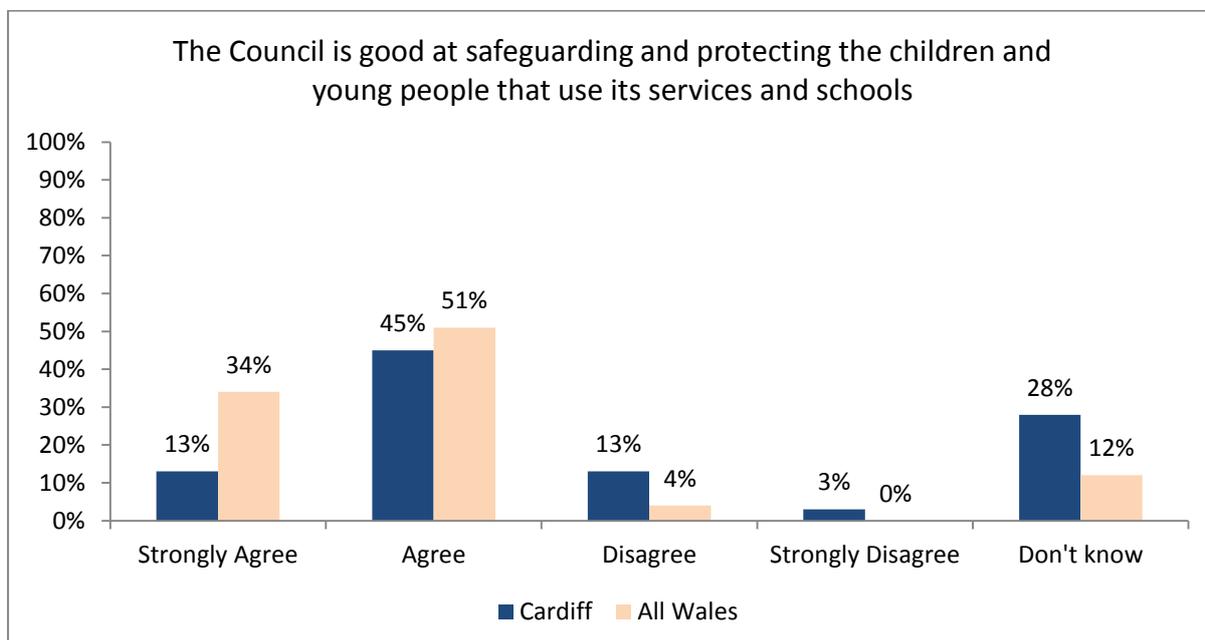
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cardiff	41	-	-	15	18	1	-	7
Expressed opinion*				37%	44%	2%		17%
All Wales	1,996	-	10	1,266	628	27	4	61
Expressed opinion*				64%	32%	1%	0%	3%

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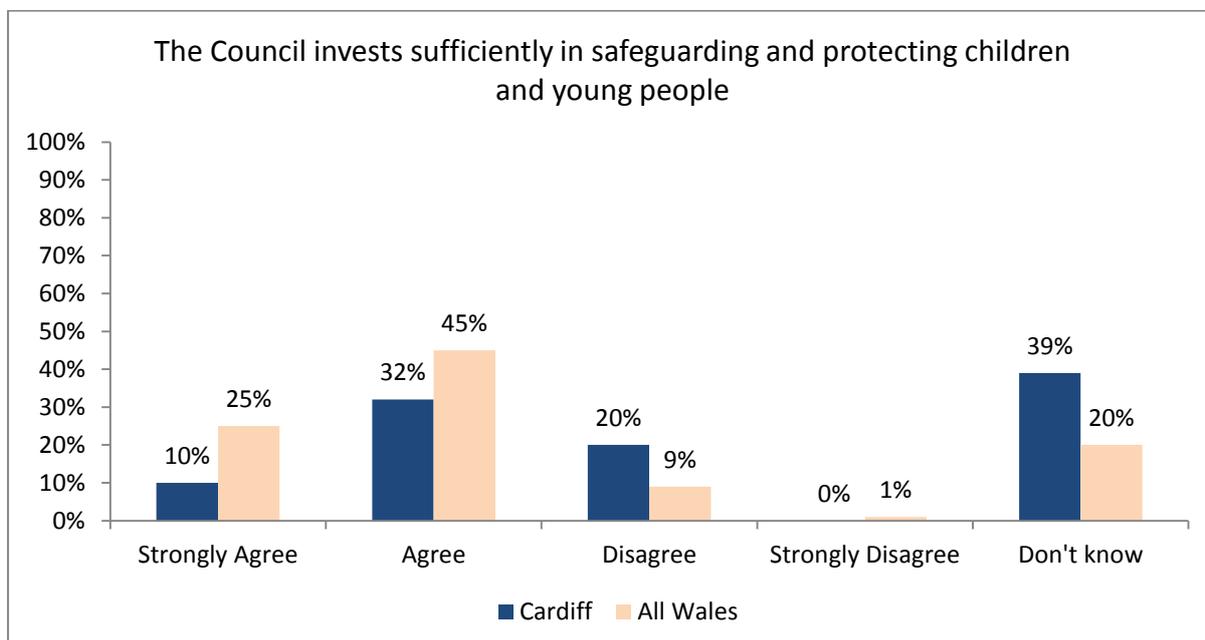
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not aware of any incidents
Cardiff	41	-	-	5	16	4	1	15
Expressed opinion*				12%	39%	10%	2%	37%
All Wales	1,996	-	11	722	911	76	5	271
Expressed opinion*				36%	46%	4%	0%	14%

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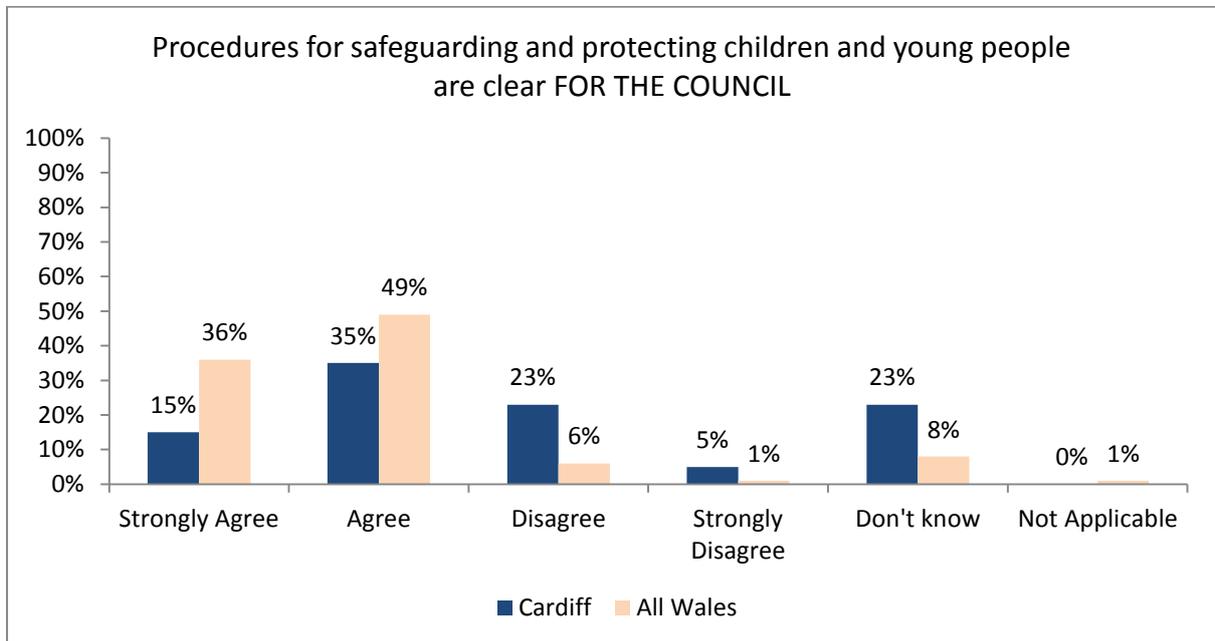
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cardiff	41	-	1	5	18	5	1	11
Expressed opinion*				13%	45%	13%	3%	28%
All Wales	1,996	-	20	665	1,000	74	3	234
Expressed opinion*				34%	51%	4%	0%	12%

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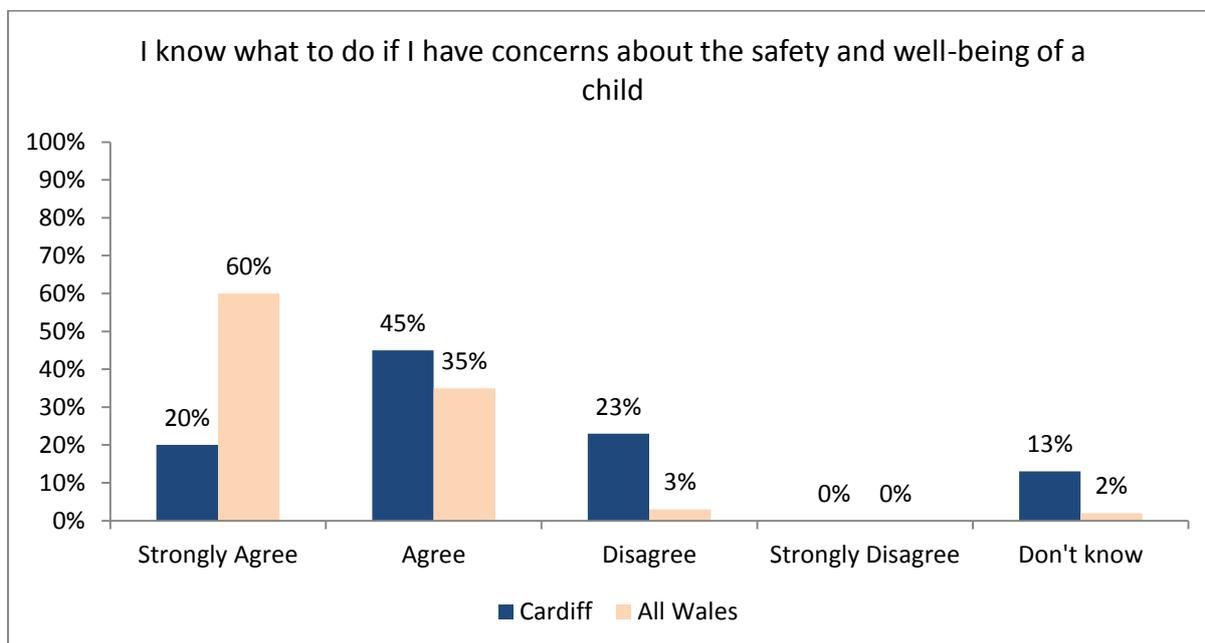
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cardiff	41	-	-	4	10	16	4	7
Expressed opinion*				10%	24%	39%	10%	17%
All Wales	1,996	-	20	344	794	339	79	420
Expressed opinion*				17%	40%	17%	4%	21%

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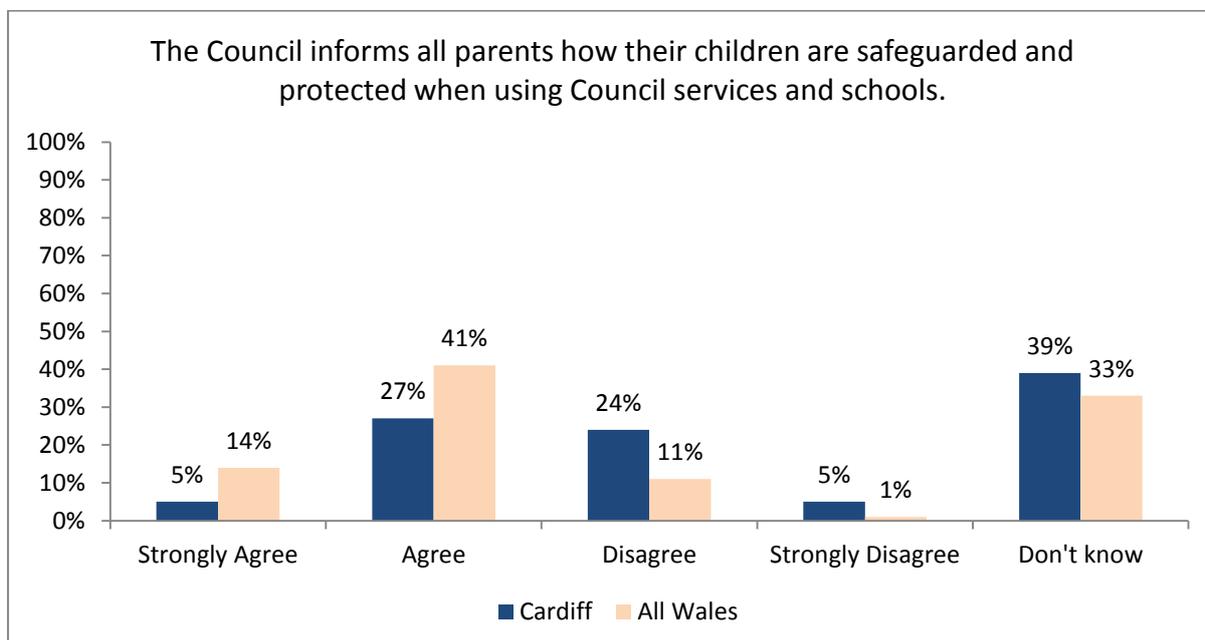
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Not applicable
Cardiff	41	41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Expressed opinion*									
All Wales	1,996	1,399	34	435	92	3	-	5	28
Expressed opinion*				81%	17%	1%		1%	5%

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	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cardiff	41	-	1	8	18	9	-	5
Expressed opinion*				20%	45%	23%		13%
All Wales	1,996	-	29	1,174	683	64	8	38
Expressed opinion*				60%	35%	3%	0%	2%

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	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cardiff	41	-	-	2	11	10	2	16
Expressed opinion*				5%	27%	24%	5%	39%
All Wales	1,996	-	27	269	816	213	29	642
Expressed opinion*				14%	41%	11%	1%	33%

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