



Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children

Conwy County Borough Council

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Status of report

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The person who delivered the work was Brian Jones.

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Summary report

Background

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

Review findings and conclusions

6. 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. We also examined policies relevant to safeguarding; reports to Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny; and we 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. 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 are mostly fit for purpose and effectively managed

7. Safeguarding is a priority in the Council's Corporate Plan and there is also a specific Corporate Safeguarding Policy in Place. The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been endorsed by the LSCB and at the time of our review was being rolled out across the Council. The policy has now been adopted and is being embedded through a series of operational reviews to identify areas where practice can be strengthened. From our survey, we found that 94 per cent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that safeguarding and protecting children and young people is a high priority for the Council, marginally below our all-Wales survey average of 96 per cent.
8. The Council has also established a Corporate Safeguarding Panel made up of senior elected members and officers including the Director of Social Services and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services. In addition, the Council Leader has the role of Children's Champion. The corporate management team receives regular updates on safeguarding issues from the Director of Social Services.
9. Education and Children's Services Officers are all aware of the importance of safeguarding and the role of the Senior Designated Officers to oversee this work. At the time of our review, the Council had not identified and agreed the Designated Safeguarding Officers for individual services. This has now been addressed with the nomination of designated leads in each directorate. Our survey found that a lower proportion than the survey average stated they knew who the Council's Designated Officer for Child Protection was, 62 per cent compared with our all-Wales survey average of 67 per cent. Likewise, fewer responders knew who the lead Councillor for child protection was, 39 per cent in the Council compared with our all-Wales survey average of 44 per cent.
10. High-level risks are managed via the Corporate Risks Register and this is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Corporate Improvement and Development Team. Children's Social Services and Education both have service level risk registers which are regularly reviewed. In both, risks are rated; mitigation actions identified; and a residual risk score produced.

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

- 11.** There are well-established methods of data collection and reporting. Children's Services regularly collect and report on a range of 30 performance indicators and performance is benchmarked against a 'family' of Welsh authorities as well as assessing the Council's performance over time. However, the Council has identified that it needs to strengthen these arrangements by collecting more qualitative data on specific outcomes and to widen coverage to include appropriate information on non-educational and social care performance on safeguarding. Consequently, the Council is planning to include within its data set a small number of corporate safeguarding indicators. These include, for example, the percentage of:

 - staff commencing in post with two references and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check;
 - staff receiving safeguarding training as they receive induction; and
 - councillors attending safeguarding training.
- 12.** From our survey we found that marginally more respondents in Conwy understand how their role contributes to safeguarding and protecting children and young people than the survey average, 96 per cent compared with 95 per cent. Paradoxically, marginally 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, 73 per cent compared with the Welsh average of 75 per cent.
- 13.** Overall procedures for administration of the DBS are in place and working. However, there is some evidence that there has been some delay in responding to changes in legislation and it was unclear whether DBS checking procedures had been fully aligned with the new legislation. In such an important area it is vital that the Council is certain that it has and is applying a robust safe recruitment policy and procedures. The Council is aware of this shortcoming and will address this as part of its Safe Recruitment task and finish group.
- 14.** Whilst the Council has clearly identified the importance of, and made available, training for elected members and staff and volunteers, attendance has not been consistently managed. The Council recognises the need to improve its performance in this area and is reviewing current performance and identifying options for improvement through its Corporate Safeguarding Group. This is revealed in our survey which found that the Council is marginally below the survey average for the number of people who have received training on safeguarding in the last six months – 28 per cent compared with 32 per cent. Also, more people have not received safeguarding training, 12 per cent in the Council compared with our survey average of 10 per cent.

The Council's approach to identifying and acting on improvements in its safeguarding arrangements is adequate but some improvements could be made

15. The Council has a Data Controller and team who advise on and promote data protection. All Children's Services staff are trained annually in data protection and are equipped with secure cabinets and encrypted computers. All staff are required to take an online course and test in data protection. Internal Audit has undertaken some work on safeguarding and Scrutiny Committees regularly receive reports on performance.
16. The service also uses a Quality Assurance Framework and conducts monthly themed audits of a sample of cases to test the effectiveness of the current system. Schools' annual safeguarding audit information is monitored by the Child Protection Co-ordinator who compiles reports on performance. An annual safeguarding audit for each school is also undertaken which identifies school-based risks and we found evidence of this approach working. For example, a number of schools identified a need for enhanced safeguarding training.
17. Our survey found that fewer respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Council deals effectively with specific incidents concerning safeguarding and protecting children and young people, 78 per cent compared with a Welsh average of 82 per cent. In addition, a 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, 47 per cent compared with 55 per cent.

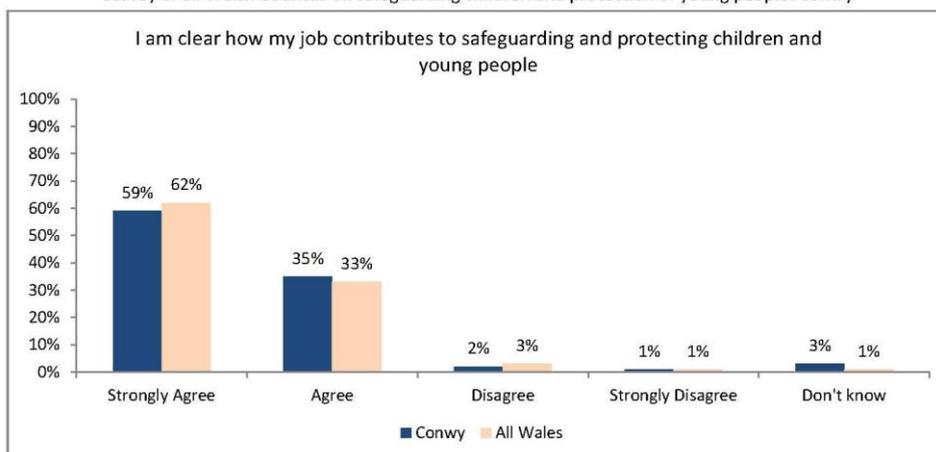
Proposals for improvement

P1	Provide all relevant staff that would benefit from information on safeguarding and the Council's responsibilities and all elected members with appropriate training.
P2	Internal Audit to include safeguarding within its annual audit programme to provide assurance on the effectiveness of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements.

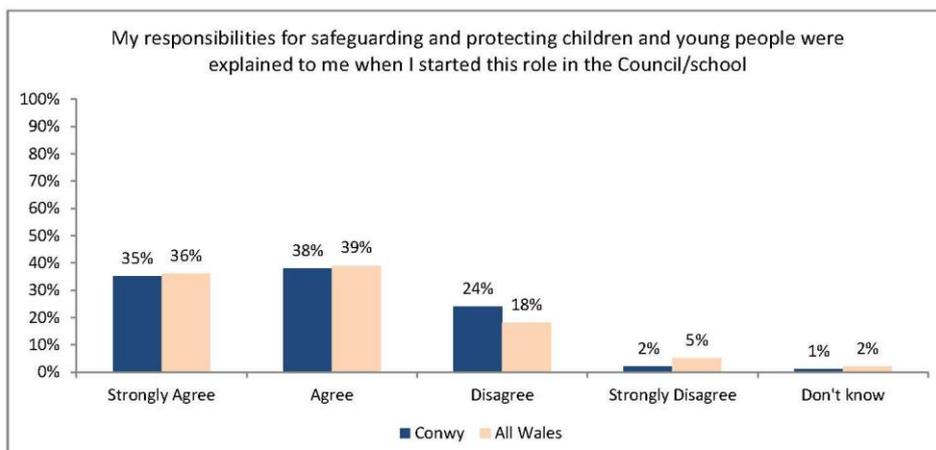
Appendix 1

Summary of survey findings

Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Conwy



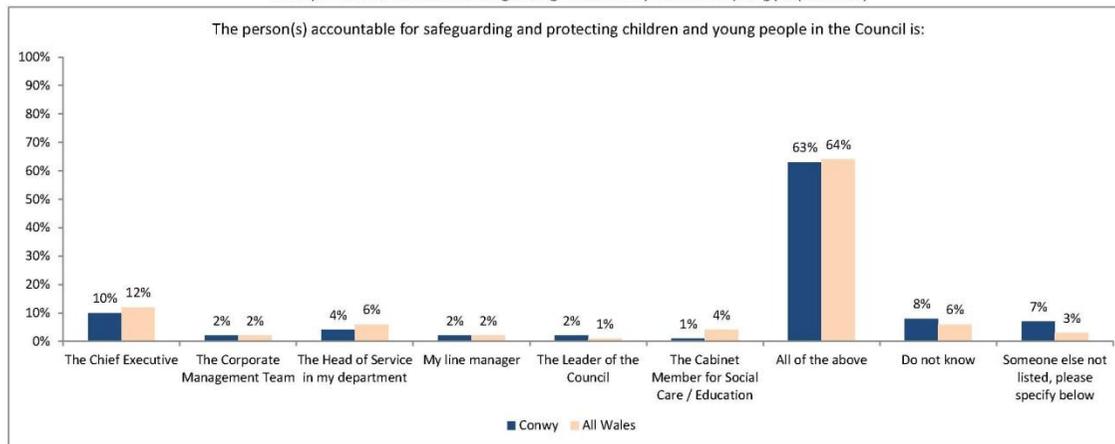
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Conwy	127	-	1	74	44	3	1	4
Expressed opinion *				59%	35%	2%	1%	3%
All Wales	1996	-	6	1235	664	53	12	26
Expressed opinion *				62%	33%	3%	1%	1%



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Conwy	127	-	-	45	48	31	2	1
Expressed opinion *				35%	38%	24%	2%	1%
All Wales	1996	-	10	716	773	358	104	35
Expressed opinion *				36%	39%	18%	5%	2%

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

Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Conwy

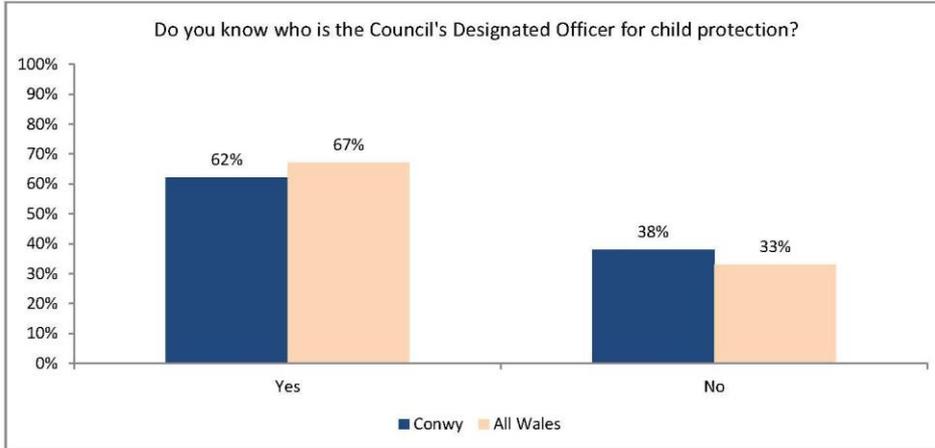


Total Not asked No reply The Chief Executive The Corporate Management Team The Head of Service in my department My line manager The Leader of the Council The Cabinet Member for Social Care / Education All of the above Do not know Someone else not listed, please specify below

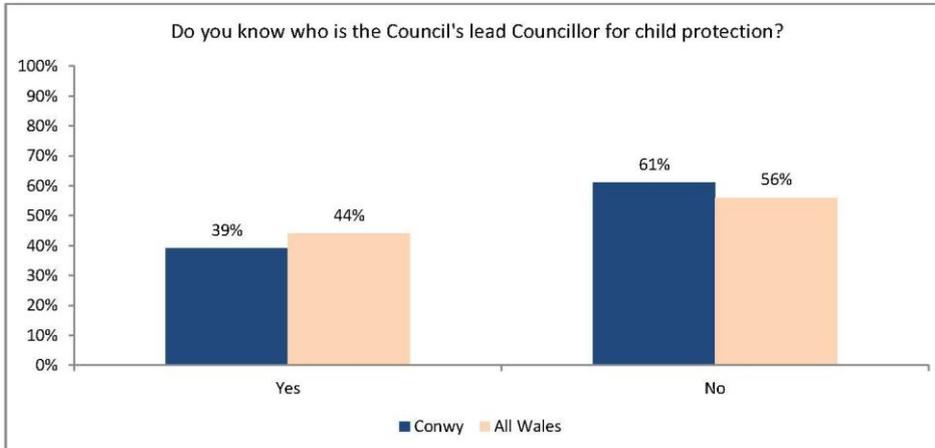
Conwy	127	-	2	13	2	5	3	3	1	79	10	9
Expressed opinion *				10%	2%	4%	2%	2%	1%	63%	8%	7%
All Wales	1996	-	68	223	34	124	47	19	69	1231	115	66
Expressed opinion *				12%	2%	6%	2%	1%	4%	64%	6%	3%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Conwy



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Conwy	127	-	2	77	48
Expressed opinion *				62%	38%
All Wales	1996	-	13	1337	646
Expressed opinion *				67%	33%



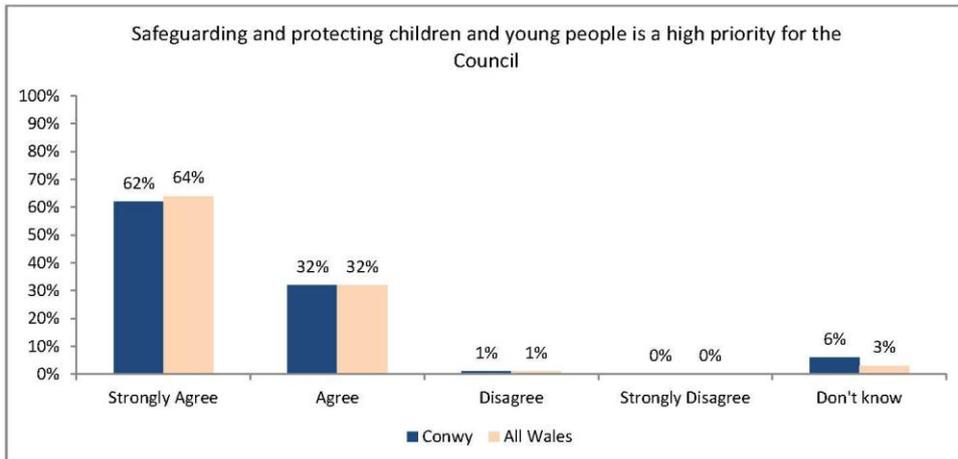
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Yes	No
Conwy	127	-	-	49	78
Expressed opinion *				39%	61%
All Wales	1996	-	13	881	1102
Expressed opinion *				44%	56%

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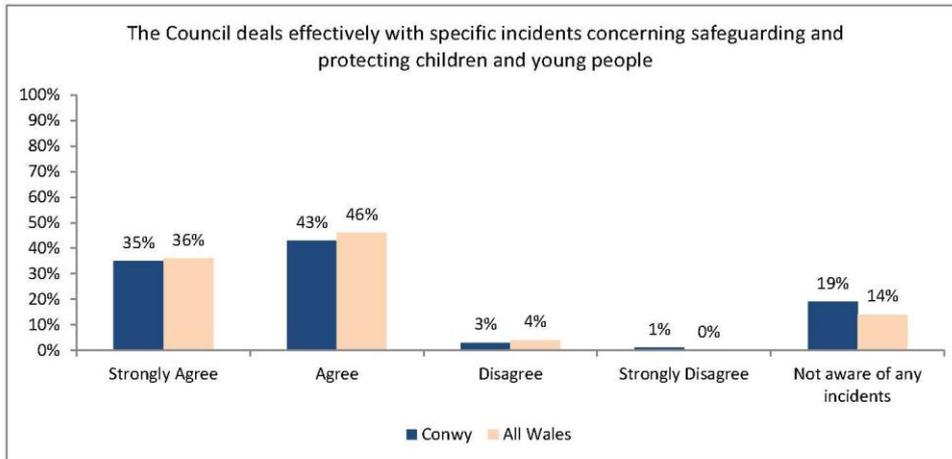
	Total	Not asked	No reply	0-6 months ago	7-12 months ago	1-2 years ago	More than 2 years ago	I cannot remember	I have never received training
Conwy	127	-	-	36	23	22	22	9	15
Expressed opinion *				28%	18%	17%	17%	7%	12%
All Wales	1996	-	4	644	462	374	199	121	192
Expressed opinion *				32%	23%	19%	10%	6%	10%



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Conwy	127	-	1	78	40	1	-	7
Expressed opinion *				62%	32%	1%	-	6%
All Wales	1996	-	10	1266	628	27	4	61
Expressed opinion *				64%	32%	1%	0%	3%

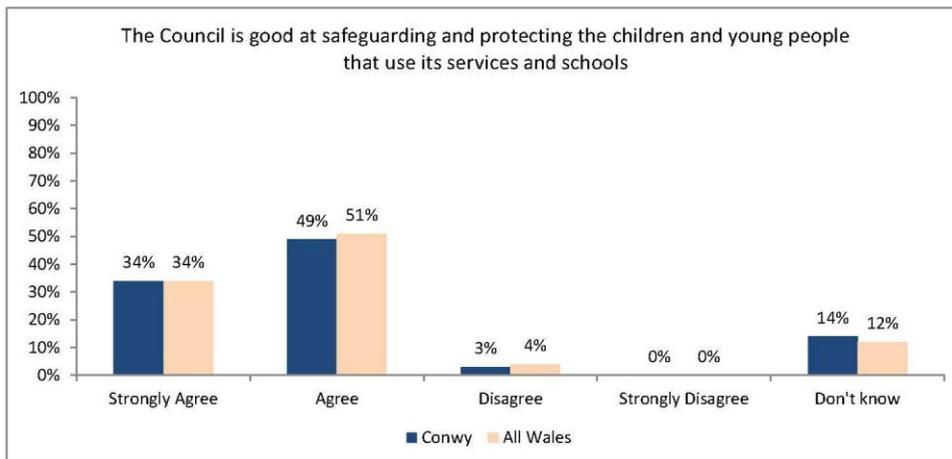
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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Conwy



Total Not asked No reply Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Not aware of any incidents

Conwy	127	-	-	44	54	4	1	24
Expressed opinion *				35%	43%	3%	1%	19%
All Wales	1996	-	11	722	911	76	5	271
Expressed opinion *				36%	46%	4%	0%	14%

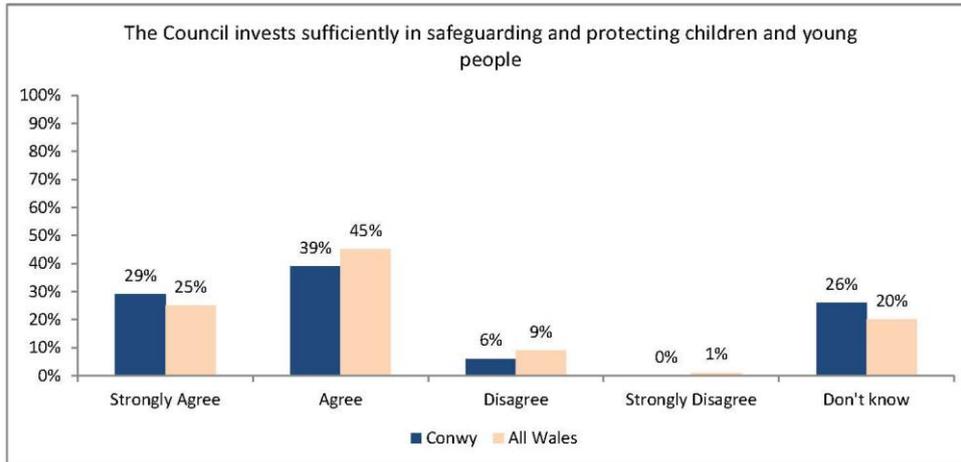


Total Not asked No reply Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't know

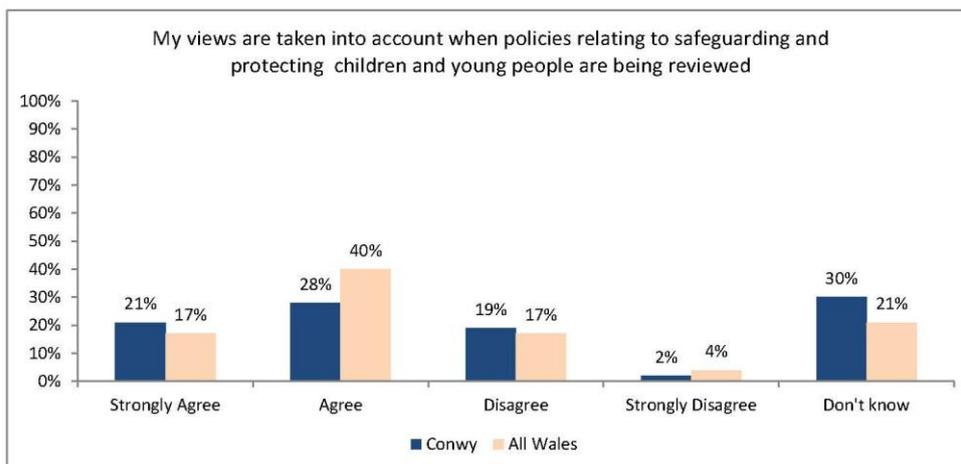
Conwy	127	-	2	43	61	4	-	17
Expressed opinion *				34%	49%	3%		14%
All Wales	1996	-	20	665	1000	74	3	234
Expressed opinion *				34%	51%	4%	0%	12%

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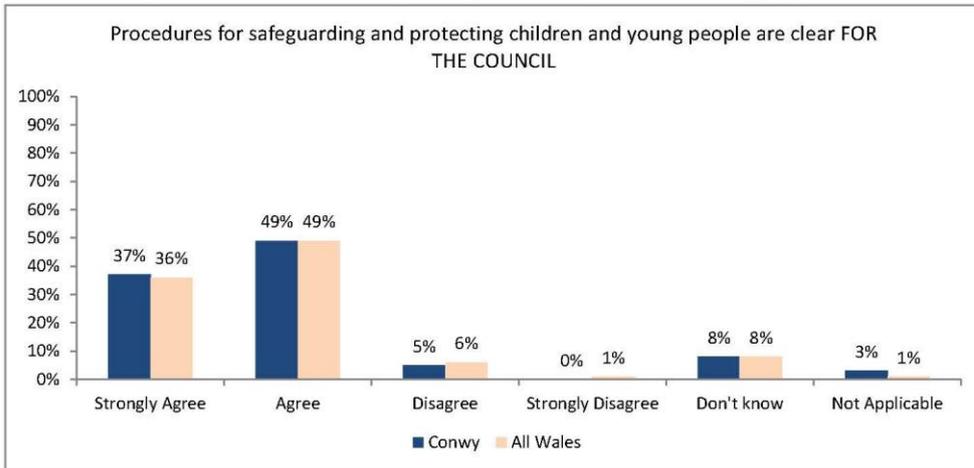
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Conwy	127	-	5	35	48	7	-	32
Expressed opinion *				29%	39%	6%		26%
All Wales	1996	-	17	491	895	182	19	392
Expressed opinion *				25%	45%	9%	1%	20%



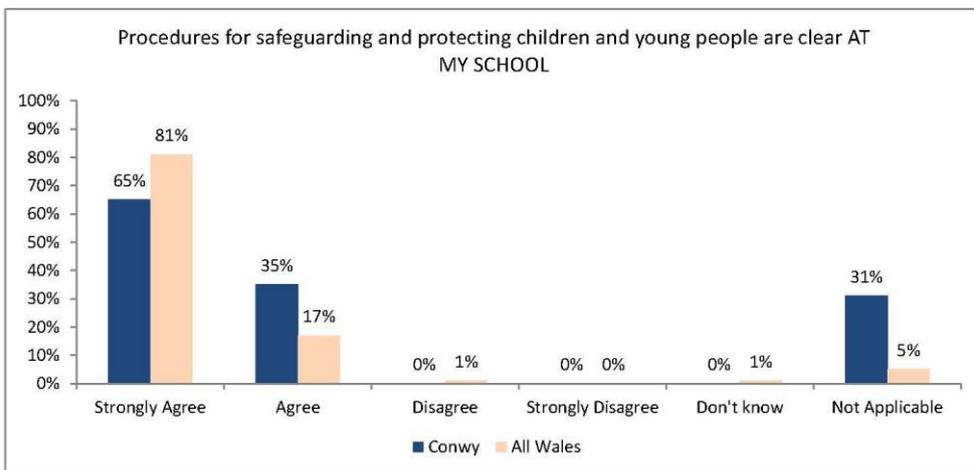
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Conwy	127	-	2	26	35	24	3	37
Expressed opinion *				21%	28%	19%	2%	30%
All Wales	1996	-	20	344	794	339	79	420
Expressed opinion *				17%	40%	17%	4%	21%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Conwy



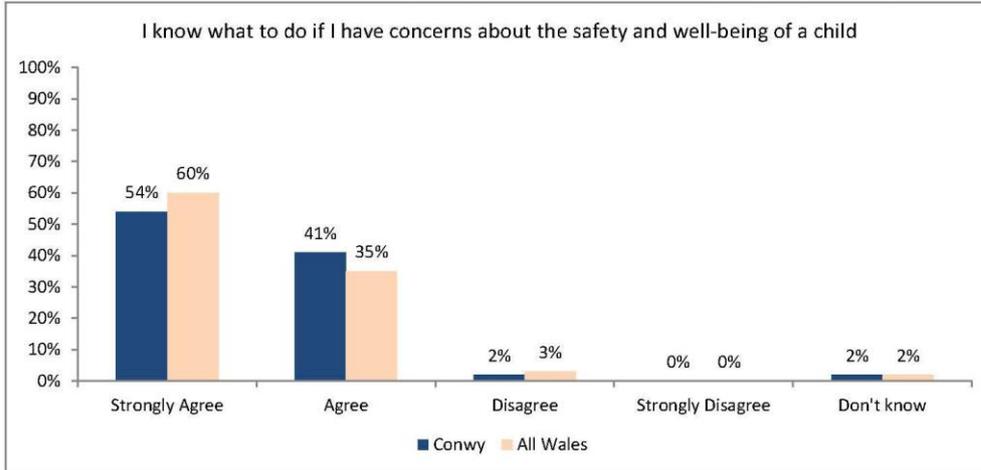
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Not Applicable
Conwy	127	-	6	44	58	6	-	10	3
Expressed opinion *				37%	49%	5%		8%	3%
All Wales	1996	-	39	701	942	114	14	160	26
Expressed opinion *				36%	49%	6%	1%	8%	1%



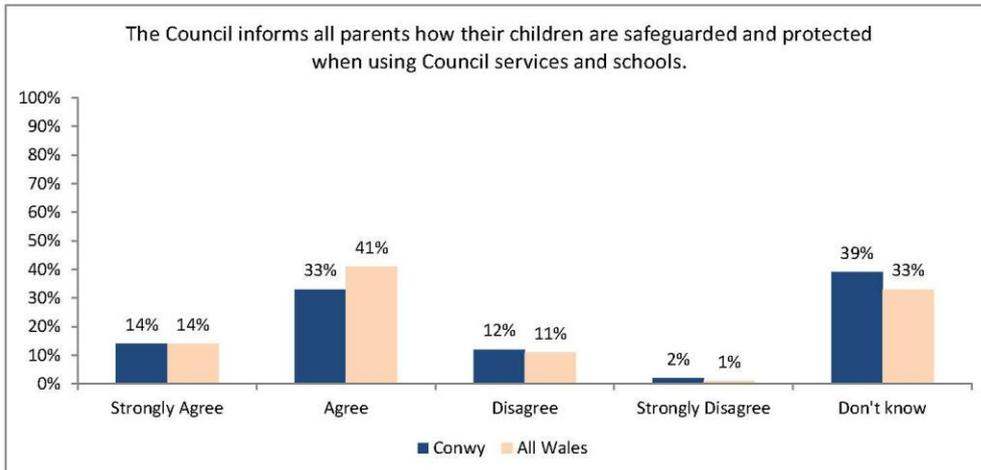
	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Not Applicable
Conwy	127	49	11	33	18	-	-	-	16
Expressed opinion *				65%	35%				31%
All Wales	1996	1399	34	435	92	3	-	5	28
Expressed opinion *				81%	17%	1%		1%	5%

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Survey of all Welsh Councils on safeguarding children and protection of young people: Conwy



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Conwy	127	-	-	69	52	3	-	3
Expressed opinion *				54%	41%	2%	-	2%
All Wales	1996	-	29	1174	683	64	8	38
Expressed opinion *				60%	35%	3%	0%	2%



	Total	Not asked	No reply	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Conwy	127	-	1	18	42	15	2	49
Expressed opinion *				14%	33%	12%	2%	39%
All Wales	1996	-	27	269	816	213	29	642
Expressed opinion *				14%	41%	11%	1%	33%

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