

Report to	<b>Audit Committee</b>
Date	<b>16 June 2025</b>
Lead Officer	<b>ACFO Anthony Jones, Transformation, Planning and Performance</b>
Contact Officer	<b>AM Paul Kay, Prevention and Protection</b>
Subject	<b>Safeguarding Annual Update 2024-25</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This Annual Safeguarding Report outlines the safeguarding activities undertaken by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. It reaffirms the Service's commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals across North Wales, detailing the number and nature of safeguarding referrals made for both children and adults at risk. The report also highlights the proactive role of staff in identifying and responding to signs of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 In 2024–2025, the Service made 24 child and 269 adult safeguarding referrals. While child referrals declined slightly from previous years, adult referrals remained high, reflecting the Service's growing role in community safeguarding. Denbighshire and Conwy saw the highest referral rates for children and adults respectively.
- 3 The Service continued to face challenges in training delivery due to qualification requirements but mitigated these through partnerships and digital learning platforms. Strategic priorities for 2025 include embedding safeguarding leads across regions, enhancing data systems, and aligning training with national standards. The Service remains committed to continuous improvement, transparency, and multi-agency collaboration.

## RECOMMENDATION

- 4 It is recommended that Members note the Service's commitment to:
  - i) Expand internal training capacity by supporting staff to achieve higher safeguarding qualifications;
  - ii) enhance safeguarding awareness in low-referral areas like Wrexham and Ynys Môn through targeted outreach and training;
  - iii) strengthen data collection and analysis to better monitor trends and inform strategic decisions; and
  - iv) implement functional safeguarding leads across all operational areas to ensure consistent practice and leadership.

## BACKGROUND

- 5 The Service plays a vital role in safeguarding vulnerable individuals through its prevention, protection, and emergency response functions. The Service operates within the legal framework of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and works closely with Regional Safeguarding Boards, local authorities, and health services. Safeguarding is embedded in the Service's culture and is supported by governance structures, training, and inter-agency collaboration.

## INFORMATION

- 6 Children: 24 referrals in 2024, with Denbighshire accounting for one-third. No referrals in Wrexham or Ynys Môn.
- 7 Adults: 269 referrals, with Conwy leading. A five-year upward trend highlights the Service's increasing safeguarding role.
- 8 Training: 906 completions of Level A training; 893 staff completed Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) training. Collaboration with Conwy Council supports Level B delivery.
- 9 Governance: Oversight by Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), and internal audit teams ensures compliance and accountability.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The safeguarding work directly supports NWFRS's well-being objectives by protecting vulnerable individuals from harm, promoting safe communities, and contributing to the broader goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
Budget	Delivering safeguarding training, expanding internal capacity, and improving data systems require financial investment.
Legal	NWFRS must comply with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and related safeguarding legislation.
Staffing	Safeguarding responsibilities place additional demands on staff, particularly in training and reporting.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Safeguarding must be inclusive and accessible to all, respecting individuals' rights and cultural needs.
Risks	Key risks include underreporting in certain areas, inconsistent training standards, and limited internal training capacity.