

This Report will be made public on 16 January 2024



Report Number **A/23/20**

To: Full Council
Date: 24th January 2024
Status: Non key decision
Responsible Officer: Andy Blaszkowicz, Director of Housing and Operations

SUBJECT: Refresh of the Council's Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy 2023 and general update

SUMMARY: The Council is part of the statutory safeguarding role within the wider public sector, with responsibilities to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The children, young people and vulnerable adults safeguarding policy of the Council has been updated and is attached at Appendix 1. Council are advised of the changes made to the 2023 policy as the refresh takes place every two years. Council are also advised of the wide range of activity that has taken place over the last few years year with updates on safeguarding practice. Due to the nature of the content of the safeguarding policy Council are presented with a public version (available on the website). An internal version containing personal information is available on the intranet for staff and members.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. To receive and note report C/23/20.**
- 2. To agree and adopt the updated safeguarding policy.**

Introduction

- 1.1 Section 11 of The Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on key organisations to ensure that, in discharging their functions, they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable young people. Similar obligations apply to vulnerable adults under The Care Act 2014.
- 1.2 The Council is part of the statutory safeguarding role within the wider public sector, with responsibilities to children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 1.3 The safeguarding policy was last published in October 2021 and is subject to a review on a 2 yearly cycle. Since the policy was last published there have been some changes to legislation, policy and practice and the following changes / additions have been made to the policy:
 - Additional responsibilities placed on organisations including Local Authorities to address the changing trends in safeguarding matters highlighted.
 - Council's response to changes in terms of practice where applicable is shown.
 - The Violence Reduction Bill 2021 resulting in the Serious Violence Duty in 2022 is reflected in the refreshed policy.
 - The policy has been streamlined and some sections changed from previous versions of the policy to improve its layout and to provide links to relevant updated websites etc.
 - Changes to practice eg requirement to apply the Mental Capacity Act for decision making by vulnerable people and clarifying how the Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) process can be initiated (when anyone feels that an adult has died or come to serious harm from a failure in partnership working). This has been added as a result of findings from audits on FHDC practice.
 - Where types of abuse were set out in the scope of the policy these are now set out in the appendix section of the new policy. The types of abuse have been added to a table of definitions as opposed to being described individually in the glossary of terms. In addition, updated embedded links have been added.
 - The internal version of the policy is updated with new DO (Designated Officer) details.
- 1.4 Due to the nature of the content of the safeguarding policy Council are presented with a public version (available on the website). An internal version containing personal information is available on the intranet for staff and members.
- 1.5 On 14th November 2023, OSC considered a paper and accompanying documents including the policy and key points made by OSC asked for a flow chart on how councillors and members of the public can make safeguarding referrals. This will be made clearer on the website and link to the new policy. Anonymised case studies will also be added to the website. Contractor training on safeguarding will be part of a further review on commissioning key contracts.

- 1.6 On 13th December 2023, Cabinet considered the policy and report and additional thoughts included further detail on signs of abuse and additional information on training which will be developed over the coming months

2. General updates on Safeguarding

- 2.1 Over the last 2 years the Council has been the subject of a number of audits and has participated in various reviews and taken the lead for the County on some of these. Feedback has been positive, and our work has often been cited as best practice, for example when the new KMSAB strategy was being consulted on FHDC carried out exactly how KMSAB wanted guided conversations to take place (with partners and internal staff). We were the only District Council in Kent that did this and KMSAB were keen to point out we had shown best practice in this.
- 2.2 KCSMP also carried out a review of their priorities which we supported as well as leading and coordinating across Kent on a number of other requests from KMSAB and KCSMP. This included a single all Kent District Councils-wide view on changed protocols and approaches to particular safeguarding cases (ie not individual District views).
- 2.3 There continues to be staff turnover across the organisation and as result an ongoing need to recruit new DOs from across council teams. The safeguarding page on the Intranet continues to be revised and updated including the DO rota.
- 2.4 Mandatory training on both child and adult safeguarding is monitored by the OD team and additional courses made available to key staff as appropriate. In the last year higher profile has been given to raising awareness of safeguarding (particularly as a result of receiving a number of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and staff briefings and member briefings have been carried out).
- 2.5 The Council uses a new cloud based GDPR compliant system for managing safeguarding concerns and referrals. This system has now been in use by DOs and key staff (fully trained and supported by the Safeguarding Specialist) since January 2023. The system is being used county-wide and is useful for creation of reports and other information as it gets populated.
- 2.6 In Autumn 22, a piece of work around care leavers requirements was undertaken. KCC shared with Districts a package of support they offered care leavers. Work was carried out to see whether a similar generic package could be offered by all Districts. Due to differences in practice and funding requirements this work was postponed. However, a draft care leaver package drawn up for FHDC contained a lot of good practice and intent and a basic bespoke package for FHDC will be finalised and placed on a new safeguarding page on the website. This will include practice such as offering guaranteed job interviews for care leavers where practically possible.

3.0 Data analysis and trends

- 3.1 All safeguarding concerns are recorded using relevant forms (available on the intranet). Staff are guided to the process and completion of the forms is the responsibility of the designated DO on duty or their reserve on any given day.
- 3.2 Previously all information was stored on a safeguarding drive and data analysis carried out manually. The new online system began to be fully utilised in January 2023. Therefore, data is supplied in two batches using the manual system and the online system for the latest data.
- 3.3 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023 manual system records show:

| | Child | Adult | Total |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Q1 | 8 | 13 | 21 |
| Q2 | 8 | 28 | 36 |
| Q3 | 10 | 24 | 34 |
| Q4* | 4 | 16 | 20 |
| Total | 30 | 81 | 111 |

*In Q4 there is some overlap with the new QES system – this table only shows those not captured on the QES system

1st January 2023 - mid September 2023 QES shows:

| | Child | Adult | Both | Total |
|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| Q4 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 9 |
| Q1 | 4 | 16 | 2 | 22 |
| Q2 | 4 | 11 | 3 | 18 |
| Total | 10 | 34 | 5 | 49 |

By way of comparison a breakdown of concerns received in 20-21 and 21-22 is provided below:

| | Child (20-21) | Adult (20-21) | Child (21-22) | Adult (21-22) |
|----|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Q1 | 1 | 13 | 5 | 17 |
| Q2 | 1 | 14 | 4 | 26 |
| Q3 | 2 | 11 | 4 | 17 |
| Q4 | 0 | 12 | 6 | 27 |

A summary across a number of years shown below:

| Year | Child | Adult | Both | Total |
|-------------------|--------|--------|------|---------|
| 2020-21 | 4 | 50 | n/a | 54 |
| 2021-22 | 19 | 87 | n/a | 106 |
| 2022-23 | 30 + 2 | 81 + 7 | n/a | 111 + 9 |
| 2023-24 (to date) | 8 | 27 | 5 | 40 |

In addition to the above data, the council applies the KMSAB Hoarding policy and in particular the work of the private sector housing team is important in dealing with hoarding and neglect cases. The hoarding coordinators (Peabody) have recorded the following number of neglected and hoarding cases in the District:

| | New cases | Closed cases |
|---------|-----------|--------------|
| 2021/22 | 47 | 34 |
| 2022/23 | 33 | 27 |

3.4 Trends and comparisons

From the above data the increase in adult concerns over the years potentially reflects a number of changes in practice as well as societal issues. Over the last few years, housing and welfare cases feature more as these teams are now involved heavily in safeguarding work. The impact of Covid / cost of living etc has seen a rise in calls for support and help. The rise may also be related to potentially increased safeguarding awareness amongst practitioners and additional issues falling under safeguarding e.g. dementia and increased mental health issues are having an impact. Staff are guided to signpost to support services as not all cases will be safeguarding but they can be complex and where any doubt it is always advised that a safeguarding concern is raised and DOs are then able to assess further.

4.0 Safeguarding audits, case reviews and staff inputs

- 4.1 F&HDC are required to complete a very detailed child safeguarding audit every 2 years and this is a statutory s11 audit compiled by KSCMP. This was undertaken in the Summer of 2022, with all sections completed in time and with evidence attached covering projects, case studies, meeting notes, emails, guidance documents, policy and process as well as screenshots of the intranet and website amongst some of the evidence needed to demonstrate compliance. The majority of the S11 audit was deemed compliant. A few areas e.g. development of the website, updated recruitment policy etc. remained amber and are works in progress.
- 4.2 For the KMSAB a very detailed annual statutory SAF (Self-Assessment Framework) is required to be completed. This involves an annual peer review and assessments of outstanding work from previous audits and progress on the current one. The SAF is extremely detailed requiring information on the councils approach to adult safeguarding covering governance, training, accountability, partnership working etc. with large amounts of evidence required. The SAF for this year was due for completion by early November 2023 and the peer review took place in mid-November. The majority of the SAF was deemed compliant. A few areas e.g. staff awareness of the Mental Capacity Act, Carer Assessments, and co-occurring conditions, as well as further training for contractors, etc. remained amber/red and are works in progress. Overall, the Council's SAF return was considered by the panel to be very strong and we have been asked to share practice with other agencies to help drive improvement.
- 4.3 The KMSAB also send out an annual Interagency report template requiring the Council to demonstrate how it is meeting the priorities of the Safeguarding Adults Board, again with evidence. FHDC duly completed this and provided the evidence required.

4.4 Council are informed that over the last year or so FHDC for the first time has been involved in a number of detailed adult case reviews including Statutory Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs).

4.5 It is recommended that full Council adopt the refreshed safeguarding policy.

5.0 Risk Management

5.1

| Perceived risk | Seriousness | Likelihood | Preventative action |
|--|-------------|------------|---------------------|
| Policy not adopted and statutory duty to compromised | Medium | Low | To adopt the policy |

6. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

6.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report. As stated in the body of the report statutory duties are imposed on local authorities by the Children Act 2004, the Care Act 2014 and most recently the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The updated policy provides the framework for the Council to fulfil these statutory obligations.

6.2 Finance Officer's Comments (RH)

The annual contribution to the new QES system (expected to be between £2,500 and £3,000) can be funded from the current 23/24 base budget.

6.3 Equalities and Diversities comments (GE/JL)

The safeguarding policy sets out how the most vulnerable in society are protected and covers all protected groups. An up to date EQIA has been completed.

7. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting.

Jyotsna Leney (Health wellbeing and Partnerships Senior Specialist)
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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report: None.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy