

This Report will be made public on 18.10.2022



Report Number **OS/22/06**

To: Overview and Scrutiny
Date: 26th October 2022
Status: Non - Key Decision
Responsible Officer: Jyotsna Leney
Responsible Member: Cllr Jennifer Hollingsbee, Cabinet Member for Communities, Lifeline, Area Officers & Street Homeless

SUBJECT: SAFEGUARDING 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. This report provides updates since the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the Council's revised safeguarding policy in Autumn 2021.

RECOMMENDATION:

- a. To receive and note the report

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 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 Council's safeguarding policy was updated in November 2021 as part of a regular 2 year cycle of updates. When reviewing this policy the Oversight and Scrutiny Committee made some recommendations and comments and this report provides updates on these and other safeguarding matters.

2. Recruitment of Designated Safeguarding Officers

- 2.1 In Autumn 2021 concerns were raised about the number of Designated Safeguarding Officers (DOs) within the Council. It was noted that this number had fallen through routine staff turnover. The Council's DOs operate on a fortnightly rota system, with one main DO and at least one reserve available to handle safeguarding concerns each day. The number of DOs had fallen to the extent that individual DOs were having to cover too many days on the rota, which many were finding unsustainable on top of their existing workloads, and there was insufficient resource to cover for staff leave within the rota. In addition to these difficulties, in November 2021 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee raised a concern that all of the current DOs were female.
- 2.2 In January 2022 a recruitment drive was launched across the Council to find new DOs. This drive was targeted primarily towards departments and teams which did not currently have a member of staff trained as a DO, following an audit of the cross-Council spread of existing DOs. A secondary focus of the recruitment drive was to recruit male staff members to the team.
- 2.3 As a result of this recruitment drive, the Council has increased the pool of DOs from 15 to 21, an increase of 6. These 6 include 3 male members of staff and have been recruited from a range of departments including Private Sector Housing and ICT. This has taken the pressure off the existing DOs and the duty rota, as well as increasing the spread of safeguarding knowledge and awareness across departments.

3. Safeguarding Audits

- 3.1 The Council has been required to participate in several statutory safeguarding audits in 2021-2022.

- 3.2 In November 2021 the Council was audited by the East Kent Audit Partnership (EKAP). This audit focussed on the Council's safeguarding policy and procedures and identifying any significant risks. The result of this audit was to give Reasonable Assurance to the Council's safeguarding practice – this is the second highest level of assurance that can be given.
- 3.3 In June 2022 the Council was asked to complete returns for two audits being undertaken by the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board (KMSAB). The first of these was the Annual Inter Agency Report, in which the Council was asked to demonstrate the ways in which we met the KMSAB priorities for 2021-2022 – Prevention; Awareness; Quality. The council were able to provide detailed information for each section and self-assessed our work as Extremely Good.
- 3.4 The second audit for KMSAB was the Self-Assessment Framework (SAF), which also took place in June 2022. Unlike the previous SAF, this year's was described as Thematic, and focussed specifically on four key areas of adult safeguarding – Legal Literacy; Self-Neglect and Hoarding; Person Centred Practice; Learning Embedded from Safeguarding Adult Reviews. There was much overlap between this audit and the Interagency Report in terms of the information we were asked to provide. The Council's return has now been peer reviewed, and we were graded as 'Met' in 12 sections and 'Partly Met' in three sections (plus one 'N/A'). No area was found to be 'Not Met' and the Council has created an action plan to address the three areas where more work is required, which relate to use of the Mental Capacity Act when working with clients, and to sharing of information and learning both internally and externally.
- 3.5 In September 2022, the Council had to complete the Section 11 Audit for Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP). This audit required the Council to demonstrate how we are meeting the requirements for safeguarding children, with a focus on key areas such as a management commitment to safeguarding; staff training; inter-agency working; and information sharing. In the Council's initial submission, we have graded ourselves as 'Met' in 49 sections and 'Partly Met' in two sections, and again there were no areas felt to be 'Not Met'. The peer review stage of this audit is due to take place in October 2022, where we will be asked to explain our gradings.

4. Safeguarding Training Update

- 4.1 All staff are required to complete mandatory eLearning courses in Child Safeguarding, Adult Safeguarding, and Prevent – the Adult Safeguarding course became mandatory in Autumn 2021. This eLearning is mandatory for new starters and must be repeated every three years. Adhering to safeguarding policies and procedures, and undertaking relevant training is an aspect in everyone's job descriptions. Newly recruited Designated Officers have also completed further eLearning (provided by KSCMP) to ensure they have the greater knowledge and understanding required for their role.

- 4.2 In addition, in January/February 2022 in person training was delivered to staff in the Grounds Maintenance team, as this team has limited access to computers to complete eLearning. This training gave a brief overview of safeguarding and how to recognise the signs of abuse and was focussed on the types of issues and concerns that members of the Grounds Maintenance team might encounter during their work around the district. Following this training a member of the Grounds Maintenance Team volunteered for Designated Officer training, to provide the team with advice and guidance should concerns arise.
- 4.3 Face to face training for Council staff has been on hiatus over the last two years, due to both the pandemic and staffing changes where the Council did not have any certified safeguarding trainers remaining to deliver training. Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP), who deliver the Associate Trainer training, had suspended this programme during the pandemic and have only just restarted it in Autumn 2022. The Council's Safeguarding Specialist is now booked onto the Associate Trainer Course and once this has been completed, they will begin work to devise a training plan for all Council Staff.

5. Domestic Homicide Review

- 5.1 In February 2022 the Council received its first request to provide information to, and participate in, a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR). A DHR is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves. Involvement in DHRs is a statutory function of the Council.
- 5.2 The review process required the Council to gather any information held in relation to the individuals involved in the case, and to then write a report setting out that information and identifying if there were any missed opportunities or learning that could be taken from the case. The Council held comparatively little information relating to the case (with the majority of contact relating to routine Council Tax and benefits payments).
- 5.3 Some learning for the Council was identified from the report. In particular there was a lack of knowledge across the Council as to the role of the Community Safety Unit (CSU), and how to refer individuals into the CSU. This has already been addressed by delivering a short presentation about the CSU to a Management Meeting as well as to the All Staff Briefing. In addition, information about the CSU was included in an all staff Friday email.
- 5.4 The DHR process remains ongoing and is unlikely to be completed until 2023 at the earliest, although Council involvement is likely to be minimal going forward.

6. Figures on Safeguarding Concerns

- 6.1 In the last 12 months, the numbers of safeguarding concerns raised with the Council's safeguarding officers are as follows:

Quarter	Adult Concerns	Child Concerns	Total Concerns
01/10/2021 – 31/12/2021	17	4	21
01/01/2022 – 31/03/2022	27	6	33
01/04/2022 – 30/06/2022	13	8	21
01/07/2022 – 30/09/2022*	25	8	33
Total	82	26	108

*Figures to 23/09/2022

- 6.2 The Council continues to receive more concerns in relation to adults than to children, although the number of child cases has increased slightly in 2022.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 7.1 There is not a great deal of risk management involved in this issue:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Safeguarding duty not met	high	low	Continue with training, ongoing development work and ensure safeguarding remains at the forefront of thinking when dealing with issues in the community

8. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

8.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

This report supports the Council in discharging its statutory duties under the Children Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014.

8.2 Finance Officer's Comments (RH)

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

8.3 Communication Officer Comments (KA)

There are no communications implications arising from this report.

8.4 HR Officer comments (RB)

There are no HR implications emanating directly from this report.

8.5 Equalities and Diversities comments (GE)

Safeguarding by its very nature protects vulnerable people and all protected groups against harm and abuse. The Safeguarding policy has an up to date EQIA.

8.6 Climate change implications (JL)

There are no climate change implications directly arising from this report and neglect issues may uncover some environmental problems that could be addressed and therefor the contribution would be positive.

9. 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

Tel: 01303 853460

Email: jyotsna.leney@shepway.gov.uk