

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE  
HEALTH, WELLBEING & PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE**

**Date: June 2019**

**1. REPORT TITLE**

**Submitted by:** Sarah Moore, Partnerships Manager

**Portfolio:** Community Safety and Wellbeing

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Purpose of the Report**

To update the Scrutiny Committee on progress with delivery of the Borough's Safeguarding Workplan 2017 – 20, following a recent internal Audit, which seeks to fulfil the Council's role in safeguarding children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect.

**Recommendations**

To note the contents of the update report and provide comments, concerns or critique to Officers for further investigation.

**Reasons**

The Children Acts (1989) and (2004), as amended by the Children and Social Work Act (2017), along with the Care Act (2014) and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) place statutory duties on District Councils to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

The statutory guidance '*Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2018)*' provides core legislative requirements regarding the expectations of the role of District Councils working alone or in partnership with other organisations.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Safeguarding relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk of abuse or neglect, in order to protect them from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Local Authorities have a moral and legal obligation to act in the best interests of vulnerable groups and to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent harm. This not only protects and promotes the welfare of children and adults at risk but also it enhances the confidence of our Members, Officers and the general public.
- 1.2 The Council's Safeguarding Policy was reviewed and approved in January 2018, it outlines the Council's approach to safeguarding and other types of abuse and vulnerabilities such as domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and honour based violence, modern slavery and human trafficking, hate crime and preventing exploitation for the purposes of extremism and terrorism.

- 1.3 The Policy seeks to recruit, train, support and supervise staff, elected members and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and adults at risk from abuse, and to also minimise any risks to themselves. It requires staff, elected members and volunteers to adopt and abide by the Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, codes of conduct and associated procedures.
- 1.4 The Policy also commits the Council to respond promptly and effectively to any suspicions or allegations of misconduct or abuse of children or adults at risk, in line with the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) inter-agency policies and procedures for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare and the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Adult Safeguarding procedures.
- 1.5 The Council needs to ensure that it has robust mechanisms in place in order to appropriately co-ordinate safeguarding activity in the Borough. The following individuals have been identified to champion safeguarding within our organisation;
- Portfolio Holder of Community Safety and Wellbeing.
  - Chief Executive.
  - Head of Human Resources.
  - Designated Safeguarding Officer - Partnerships Manager.
  - Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer – Partnerships Vulnerability Officer.
- 1.6 The Council has also identified a number of Officers from each service area, to undertake the roles of 'Safeguarding Champions'. These Officers have received specialist training in this area and are the point of contact for queries in relation to safeguarding in their Department. They will assist the Designated Safeguarding Officer and Deputy to ensure that all staff and members are trained appropriately to recognise safeguarding issues and know where to refer concerns in relation to children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect in our communities.
- 1.7 Since the Policy was approved, there have been a number of developments and changes that have occurred as part of the delivery of the Safeguarding Workplan 2017 – 2020 and recent Internal Audit recommendations and as such this report seeks to provide an update and reassurance to the Committee.

## **2. Issues**

- 2.1 An internal Audit regarding the Council's Safeguarding Policy was recently undertaken and reported to the Executive Management Team. The Audit reported that safeguarding work in the Council is 'Adequately Controlled' and stated that while there are some control weaknesses, most key controls are in place and operating effectively. Some assurance can be given that the system, process or activity should achieve its objectives safely whilst achieving value for money.
- 2.2 The audit however made a number of recommendations, which will be considered further in Section 3 below. The recommendations were;
- 2.2.1 A risk profile specific to safeguarding issues should be developed in the Council's risk management system GRACE and be monitored in line with the Council's risk management policy.
- 2.2.2 Consideration should be given to increasing the number of safeguarding champions within the Council to promote the necessary actions required by the workforce when identifying potential cases to be reported.
- 2.2.3 Safeguarding training should be reviewed on a rolling 3 year basis to ensure that it captures all staff and members. Where possible, face to face training should be provided to staff and members in a designated period each year to minimise

- disruption. The estimated 90% of members yet to be trained should be identified and provided with relevant training at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.2.4 Heads of Service should be reminded that Service Plans across the Council, (particularly of those services where contact with members of the public is commonplace) should include a reference to tasks/ actions/milestones to be managed in respect of safeguarding issues.
  - 2.2.5 Appendix B of the Recruitment, Selection and Induction policy available on the intranet should be updated to reflect the latest review of posts requiring DBS checks.
  - 2.2.6 Further promotion of the PREVENT strategy, CSE issues, general safeguarding and modern slavery should be undertaken to raise further awareness of responsibilities and reporting procedures. Consideration should be given to including these issues periodically in team talks, on intranet notices, appraisals etc. A targeted focus on those staff members out and about in the Community should be adopted in order that they are proactive in spreading awareness.
  - 2.2.7 Training records held by the Human Resources section should be updated to include training undertaken.

### 3. **Update on Progress with Recommendations from the Audit**

- 3.1 The following progress has been made for the recommendations highlighted above in Section 2.2;
  - 3.1.1 A risk profile specific to safeguarding issues has been created and was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in April 2019. This considers safeguarding in its widest sense across the business of the Council, recognising the impact and consequences of a failure to meet our safeguarding obligations and the steps taken to mitigate any risks identified. While it is difficult for the Council to control the overall risk of safeguarding, the Council can be reassured that it has a number of controls in place to ensure that it is taking its responsibility in safeguarding seriously and enabling it to tolerate the risk. These controls include; a dedicated resource in the Partnerships Team to lead on safeguarding issues across the organisation and deliver training and awareness to staff, members and local partners; there are robust policies in place to support the delivery of safeguarding activity and there are a number of partnerships maintained to support the Council in delivering its safeguarding obligations.
  - 3.1.2 Consideration has been given to increasing the number of safeguarding champions within the Council to promote the necessary actions required by the workforce when identifying potential cases to be reported. EMT agreed that a further Safeguarding Champion was sought and assigned at the Museum, in order to increase knowledge and build available capacity across the business where contact with or awareness of vulnerable individuals is likely. This position has been filled and training is in place.
  - 3.1.3 Safeguarding training continues to be reviewed on a rolling 3 year basis (each quarter) to ensure that all staff and members are reminded to complete the training. Face to face sessions are being delivered for staff without access to a computer and regular reminders are distributed to Managers via the Safeguarding Champions. A face to face Members training session has also been co-ordinated. Access to e-learning continues and the Partnerships Team with support from Human Resources encourage staff and Members to complete their 3 year refresher training. Human Resources have now included the training as a mandatory requirement in the induction process for new starters and we hope to also include this in the appraisal process from next year. EMT are endorsing the training and ensuring compliance within their Directorates.

- 3.1.4 The Partnerships Team are working with colleagues in Business Improvement to encourage Heads of Service to include safeguarding in service planning across the Council, (particularly of those services where contact with members of the public is commonplace).
- 3.1.5 Human Resources are working to update Appendix B of the Recruitment, Selection and Induction policy, to reflect the latest review of posts requiring DBS checks.
- 3.1.6 The Partnerships Team are working to further promote a number of wider safeguarding themes such as PREVENT, CSE issues, modern slavery and human trafficking through the creation and co-ordination of a vulnerability working group, which seeks to raise further awareness of responsibilities and reporting procedures. The Team are also keen to adopt a targeted focus on those staff members out and about in the Community to ensure that they can be proactive in spreading awareness and understand the referral process.
- 3.1.7 Training records held by the Human Resources team are being regularly updated to include training undertaken and progress in reported through to the Safeguarding Champions group and the Executive Management Team (EMT).
- 3.2 The Council's Safeguarding Workplan 2017 – 2020 has been updated and is regularly reviewed by the Safeguarding Champions group. This workplan also takes into account other actions for completion and continual improvement as they are identified.
- 4. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**
- 4.1 The Safeguarding Policy and delivery of the workplan contributes to meeting the Council's Corporate Priorities for Creating Healthy and Active Communities and Creating a Cleaner, Safer and Sustainable Borough.
- 5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**
- 5.1 The Council has statutory duties under the Children Act (1989) and (2004), as amended by the Children and Social Work Act (2017), along with the Care Act (2014) and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging functions we have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect.
- 5.2 The statutory guidance '*Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2018)*' provides core legislative requirements regarding the expectations of the role of District Councils working alone or in partnership with other organisations. It makes clear that there is an expectation that everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.
- 6. **Equality Impact Assessment**
- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is being developed for this area of work.
- 7. **Financial and Resource Implications**
- 7.1 There are no specific additional financial implications or commitments required for the delivery of the safeguarding workplan.

- 7.2 There are resource implications (using existing resources) for Council Officers and Members who are involved in and will co-ordinate safeguarding activity, in particular delivering and participating in training on the Policy and accompanying Procedure and making appropriate referrals, signposting and promoting the Policy and safeguarding activity thereafter.

8. **Major Risks**

- 8.1 Failure to take appropriate action regarding safeguarding may result in the Council being unable to perform its statutory duties, leaving the Council open to legal challenge.
- 8.2 Failure to take appropriate action regarding safeguarding may lead to a child or adult at risk suffering unnecessary harm.
- 8.3 There is also a risk of reputational damage to the Council if it does not deliver its statutory duties lawfully and effectively.

9. **Key Decision Information**

- 9.1 The Council has statutory duties to safeguard, promote wellbeing and protect children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect.
- 9.2 This report can be considered key in the following ways: -
- It results in the Borough Council committing existing resources for the function to which the decision relates and;
  - To be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral wards in the Borough.

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 10.1 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy – December 2017

11. **List of Appendices**

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - Safeguarding Policy 2018 (available on request).
- 11.2 Appendix 2 – Safeguarding Action Plan – 2017 – 2020 (available on request).

12. **Background Papers**

- 12.1 None